"SAVING THE NORTHERN EXPRESS," A GREAT RAILROAD STORY NEXT WEEK!

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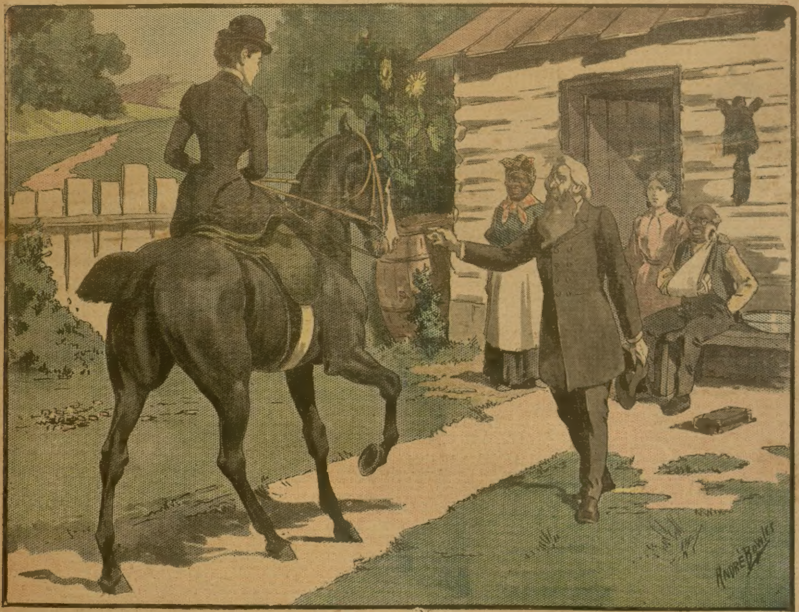
THE DEATH DIAMONDS;

or Mercy Compton's Fate.

By Emma Howard Wight.



"Why, what is the matter."

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CHAPTER I.

I stood gazing, for some moments unobserved, on my mother as she reclined with the grace which dominated her every movement in a low chair, her bronze-brown head outlined against the purple passion flower entwined about the great stone pillar of the portico. She was so beautiful and she looked so ridiculously young to be the mother of a tall, lanky girl of fifteen. She was, in fact, only thirty-two, for she had married my father, a boy of nineteen, when she was but sixteen. She was an orphan and my grandfather was her guardian. The latter, a courtly Southern gentleman, had but one child—a son. The two young people straightway fell in love with each other.

My grandfather smiled indulgently when they came and told him they wished to get married. Such a thing was absurd, impossible, he told them. They were both too young to know their own minds, but, if in two years they still cared for each other, he would give his consent. But what he believed to be a mere boyish and girlish fancy that time would cure, turned out to be something deeper and more lasting. To the hot-headed Southern boy two years seemed an eternity. He implored my mother to marry him at once without the consent of his father and she after a little hesitation, yielded. Of course, they were at once forgiven, for my grandfather had objected to the marriage solely on account of their youth. For nearly a year the boy-husband and his child-wife were rapturously happy. Then that happiness came to an abrupt end. "Rumors of war" had become a stern reality, and my father was among the first to join Jackson at Harper's Ferry.

White and mute with agony, my mother clung about his neck when the moment of parting came. His boyish face was pale to the lips as he held her close and pressed passionate kisses on the lovely childish face from the brown eyes of which a woman's anguish looked forth.

The night, following the day of my father's departure, I was born. Six months later my father was killed at the battle of Manassas. From my old black mammy, for my mother never spoke of it, I heard all about the time when my poor father was brought home dead.

"Ya'as, honey, dat sholy war a sorful time," said mammy, with a shake of her head in its bright bandanna handkerchief. She and her husband, Uncle Zachariah, and their eldest son, Jim, had remained faithful to my grandfather after the Emancipation. "Dat war a mighty sorful time. 'Be good to my po' lil' baby, Malviny,' said de ole mistis to me when she lay a-dyin', and I done thought ob dem words de day dey brung dat po' chile home dade wid a big hole in his breast. De good Lawd knows I done tried hard 'nough to keep dat promise I made to de ole mistis when she lay on her deaf-bed, but thar warn't no power on earf dat could hab kept dat boy from gwine 'way to fight, not even his po' young wife, fo' he war jest boun' to go.

"Well, dey brung him home dade, and dis ole nigger nebber gwine to fo'git dat day if she done libed to be a hundred. Ole massa, he met 'em at de do' bery quiet lak, but wid his face 'most as white as young massa's, and he done led de way to de room leadin' out from hish, whar young massa had slept all his life till he done got married. Dey laid him on de bade and ole massa, he stood thar a-lookin' down on young massa. Arter awhile I went up to ole massa and teched him on de arm. 'Massa, somebody gotter tell de young mistis,' I sade. Ole massa, he guv a kinder start and looked at me quar lak. I believe dat fo' de time he done fo'got all 'bout young massa habin' a wife an' baby. 'Shall I go tell de young mistis, massa?' I axed. 'She am down in the gyarden 'long wid de baby.' 'Ya'as, you go tell her, Malviny,' sade de ole massa.

"Well, honey, you know de corner in de ole gyarden wid de bench under de maple tree whar de roses and de orange blossoms grow so thick. Dat whar yo' fader and yo' mudder used to go fo' to make love and thar's whar I found de young mistis settin' on de bench wid you on her lap. I declar' my courage 'most gin out when I seed her, she looked so young and pooty in her white frock wid you a-cooin' on her lap. I knowed it war gwine to be de hardest thing I eber done in my life to tell her' bout young massa. 'Hab yo' done come fo' de baby, mammy?' she axed, when she looked up and seed me. 'I reckon it am nigh 'bout time fo' her nap.' 'Ya'as, honey,' I sade, as I stooped down an' took de baby. 'An' I'se done come fo' you, too. Dey wants you up at de house.' She looked up quick lak and her eyes lighted up. 'Mammy, am de young massa come home?' she axed, wid her breaf a-cómin' quick, fo' she war allers 'spectin' ob him to come home. 'Ya'as, honey,' I sade. 'But don't look dat joyful way, chile, fo' thar ain't nuffin to 'joice 'bout. De young massa, he's ben hurt.'

"Well, honey, de joy it go quick 'nough outen her eyes and she tu'n white as her frock. She stood still and quiet fo' a moment while I done laid you down on de grass fo' I war afeard dat she gwine to faint when I tell her de truf. But 'pears lak she done guessed it right off, fo' she looked up into my face and she sade, 'He's dade, mammy?' 'Ya'as, honey,' I sade, and comed nigh to her fo' to ketch her if she fainted. But she didn't do nuffin' ob de kind. 'I must go to him,' she sade, as quiet lak as though de young massa war waitin' fo' her up to de house and den she turn 'way. I tu'ned to pick yo' up, honey, and thar you lay a-crowin' and a-laughin' at de orange blossoms what de wind done blowed in yo' face.

"Ya'as, dat war a sorful time, it sholy war. Dey laid young massa ober thar in de fambly grabeyard and ole massa, he look ten years older as he watch them pile de dirt ober young massa. De young mistis, she 'gun to cry an' moan fo' de fust time sence dey brung young massa home. Dey sade dat war good fo' her, but it war mighty sad and mournful to listen to. 'He died fo' de Souf,' he ole massa he say to young mistis when it war all ober, but I reckon dat warn't much consolation to her den.

"Now, I gwine to tell you how dey comed to guv you de name ob Mussy, honey. You see dey had been a-waiting fo' de young massa to come home befo' dey done named de baby. It war nigh on to a week arter de funer'l when ole massa comed inter de room whar me and de young mistis war a-settin'. You war a-lyin' in de mistis' arms and she war a-smilin' a li'l' bit as she looked down on you. Ole massa, he stan' lookin' at ye bofe fo' a while widout sayin' nuffin'. Den he comed and laid his hand gentle lak on yo' hade and he sade, 'Shall we name de baby Mussy?' De young mistis she look up at him and her eyes filled wid tears. 'Ya'as, we'll call her Mussy,' she sade."

"I think my grandfather meant that God, in His mercy, had sent me to comfort and console my mother and that is why they named me Mercy," I said.

"I reckon dat's it, honey. You neber war lak oder chillun and yo' allers war one good, lubin' chile to yo' mammy. You ain't nebber caused her one moment's worry sence you war borned."

Then mammy told me how the war had impoverished my grandfather, and she waxed eloquent in her indignation against the "onnary, no-'count niggers what had done lef' de ole massa." My grandfather had died a few years after the war and since then my mother and I had lived at Shenandoah, as the dear old home was called, with mammy, her husband, Uncle Zach, and their son, Jim. We were very poor, but I would have been quite happy had I not known that my mother was bitterly discontented. She chafed and rebelled against the dull, quiet, monotonous life that our limited means forced us to live. Shenandoah had been one of the finest plantations in the Shenandoah Valley before the war and was still beautiful even in its neglected state. I loved it dearly, but had often heard my mother, with a bitter smile, call it her prison. For her sake I often passionately longed to be rich.

As I stood gazing tenderly upon her that June morning, I thought that there had never been any one so lovely before. She had large, soft, brown eyes, a complexion of ivory and rose, lips the color of azaleas, hair a rich bronze brown. She was tall, with a perfect figure, and carried herself with stately grace. I did not in the least resemble her. I had dark gray eyes, a fair, pale skin and long, yellow hair falling below my waist.

As I came forward my mother dropped the book she had been reading and looked up with something like a sigh of weariness.

"Did you know that the people who have bought The Manor for a summer home arrived yesterday, mother?" I asked, as I sat down at her feet.

The Manor, a Colonial mansion just across the turnpike from Shenandoah, had belonged before the war to the Pages, an old Virginian family. It had stood empty for a number of years.

"Indeed!" murmured my mother, lifting her eyes to look across the turnpike at the low, gray, rambling house standing half-hidden by magnificent old oak trees I saw that she was somewhat interested and I hastened to tell her all I had learned about our new neighbors.

"It's some famous physician from Boston who has bought The Manor," I explained. "He is a widower with one daughter and is very rich."

My mother smiled and began twisting my long yellow locks about her slender, white fingers.

"How do you know so much about the people across the way, child?" she asked.

"From Uncle Zach. He heard the talking at the postoffice. And I am sure it must be true about that doctor being rich, for there are so many servants and such fine horses and handsome carriages."

A faint shadow fell across my mother's lovely face. I leaned my head against her knee and looked up at her tenderly and wistfully.

"I wish we were rich, mother, for your sake."

She looked down upon me with a smile in which there was a touch of bitterness.

"I wish we were not so poor, child," she said.

I turned my eyes from her lovely, shadowed face and looked out over the neglected lawns where the roses grew in wild luxuriance. I little guessed how soon and in what manner that wish of mine was to be fulfilled. How well for us that we cannot read the future. Could I have done so that fair June morning, unspeakably dear as my mother was to me, I could have found it in my heart to wish that she were lying in the little graveyard beside my father.

CHAPTER II.

That afternoon I sat upon the portico reading Ivanhoe. Our well-stored library was a source of delight to me that never palled. My mother had gone for a ride A fine riding horse was one of the few luxuries in which she indulged. She rode superbly and was passionately fond of riding.

"Li'l' Missy, Zacharier done let a log fall on his arm, an' I done believe it am broke."

I looked up with a start. I had been completely absorbed in my book. Mammy was standing beside me, a troubled look on her face.

"Oh, I hope not!" I exclaimed, as I threw down my book and sprang to my feet. "Where is Uncle Zach, Mammy?"

Mammy led the way to the back of the house where Uncle Zach, with his dusky face ashy and his right arm hanging limp and helpless, sat on the stone bench beside the kitchen door.

"Oh, Uncle Zach, is your arm really broken?" I asked.

"Ya'as, honey, I'se 'feard it am," answered Uncle Zach, in a voice faint with pain.

"We must have a doctor," I exclaimed. "The arm ought to be set at once."

"Shall I go for Jim, honey?" asked mammy. "He am plowin' in de five-acre fiel'."

I stood, for the moment, reflecting. It would take Jim at least an hour to ride to town and return with the doctor, and there was a chance that the latter might not be at home. Then I quickly decided what I should do.

"Never mind, Jim, Mammy," I said. "I am going across the way for Doctor Merrill. Give Uncle Zach some brandy. I shall be back very soon."

A few minutes later I was ascending the wide steps leading up to the portico of The Manor. A red silk hammock was swung across the portico and in it reclined a girl about twelve years of age. She lifted herself on her elbow and looked at me inquiringly with a half smile. She was very pretty. She was very dark, with great black eyes, beautiful, vivid coloring, and a mass of dusky curls falling to her shoulders. She wore a white, lace-trimmed gown with a wide yellow sash about her waist and yellow ribbon streaming from her bare shoulders. I had never seen any one in the least like her and returned her curious look with interest as I went forward, and asked:

"Is Doctor Merrill at home?"

"Papa? Why, yes; do you want him?" she replied.

"If you please. Uncle Zach, our old colored man, has broken his arm, and——" I paused abruptly as a tall, dark man suddenly appeared in the doorway.

"Here is papa now," said the girl.

A strange feeling of repulsion swept over me as I looked at Doctor Merrill. He was tall and thin and stooped. Indeed, so crooked were his shoulders that it was almost a deformity. His face was dark and colorless, a grizzled beard falling half-way to his waist, hid his mouth. His eyes were dark, piercing, sombre, and his hair was perfectly white.

He came forward and spoke in a low, quiet, soft voice which I found later was habitual with him.

"What can I do for you?" he asked, courteously.

I quickly explained.

"Wait a few moments and then I will go with you," he said.

He passed into the house. I turned again to the girl in the hammock. "So you live across the way," she said. "What is your name?"

"Mercy Compton," I replied.

"Mercy," she repeated, "I never heard of any one being named Mercy before. How odd!" I did not feel called upon to explain why I was called Mercy, and she continued, "My name is Lilian. It was my mother's name, but papa says it's absurd to call me Lillian when I am so dark, so he gave me the name of Gypsy and I am never called anything else."

"I am sure that suits you," I said, with an admiring glance at her dark skin with its damask rose bloom.

"What wonderful hair you have," said Gypsy. "Do you always wear it flowing loose like that?"

"Yes," I replied.

Just then Doctor Merrill returned carrying a small satchel. Gypsy got out of the hammock and came up to me as I was about to descend the steps.

"You must come to see me," she said. "We are neighbors, you know, and we should be good friends, should we not, papa?"

Doctor Merrill looked down upon the sparkling, piquant face with a smile. His dark, rather stern eyes had softened. It was easy to see that he was very fond of his daughter.

"That would no doubt be a very pleasant arrangement," he answered.

I promised Gypsy that I would come to see her very soon. She walked down to the gate with us, holding her father's hand and chatting gaily. Then Doctor Merrill and I crossed the turnpike and I led the way to where Uncle Zach sat upon the bench with mammy beside him. Mammy, who like the majority of her race, was peculiarly susceptible to beauty, looked somewhat askance at the dark, crooked doctor. He sent her quickly away for bandages and splints, while he deftly cut open Uncle Zach's shirt sleeve. Then he turned to me.

"Do you think you can assist me?" he asked, giving me a keen look. "You won't turn faint?"

"I do not think that I will," I replied.

"Very good," said Doctor Merrill, and he then went to work to set the broken bone. I watched his hands with a sort of fascination. They were like a woman's hands, soft, white, with long, slender, tapering fingers, and their touch was wonderfully light and gentle.

Poor Uncle Zach bore the pain with great fortitude. He had refused to take the ether which the doctor had brought, and when mammy returned with splints and bandages the bone was set. I held the arm while Doctor Merrill adjusted the splints and bandages, and when it was all done, he looked at me with a little approving nod.

Just then my mother came riding along the turnpike and drew up at the fence.

My mother never looked lovelier than when she was on horseback. She sat her horse superbly and the tight-fitting habit showed off her beautiful figure to perfection. The exercise had deepened the pink on her cheeks and her rich hair was all a-gleam in the sunlight.

I saw a swift look of admiration light Doctor Merrill's dark, grave face.

"Why, what is the matter?" asked my mother, with an anxious look from Uncle Zach to Doctor Merrill.

The latter was the first to reply. He went forward toward the fence.

"There is nothing to alarm you," he said, as he lifted his hat. "Nothing more serious than a broken arm."

By this time I had reached the fence.

"Uncle Zach broke his arm, mother," I said. I saw Doctor Merrill give a quick, surprised glance from my mother to me.

"I went for Doctor Merrill because I knew it would be so long bfeore Jim could bring a doctor from town."

My mother turned her soft, brown eyes on the crooked man standing close by the fence and I saw a look of interest light them.

CHAPTER III.

Two months later, on a warm August afternoon I stood upon the portico watching my mother and Doctor Merrill as they rode side by side through the wide gate out upon the turnpike. I was conscious of a mingled feeling of impatience and distaste. Perhaps it was because of the incongruity they presented. My mother so straight and graceful in the saddle, Doctor Merrill uncouth and awkward with his crooked shoulders.

"He should never ride horseback!" I exclaimed, speaking my thoughts aloud unconsciously.

"Who, papa?" murmured a saucy voice at my elbow.

I turned quickly, the color rising to my cheek. Gypsy stood regarding me with an amused smile, her black eyes sparkling mischievously.

"I had no idea you were there," I murmured, confusedly.

"Of course not," she said, easily. "You were so absorbed watching Mrs. Compton and papa that you never heard me come in. I perfectly agree with you that papa does not cut much of a figure on horseback. I expect he is aware of that himself, but when a man's in love he does lots of things he wouldn't think of doing when he's in his sober senses," and Gypsy nodded her head sagely.

I stared at her bewilderingly.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

Gypsy laughed.

"Mercy Compton, you're the greenest girl for your age that I ever heard of," she replied. "I suppose it's because you have always lived in this dull old place. Why, papa is just dead in love with your mother. Where are your eyes, Mercy? What do you suppose has brought him over here so constantly?"

"I—I never thought about it," I faltered. "He came at first to see Uncle Zach." Gypsy smiled. "I am very sorry," I added.

"I am sure I do not see why you should be sorry," declared Gypsy. "Now, I am rather pleased at the prospect of having your pretty mamma for my mamma, and you for a sister."

"You are taking a great deal for granted," I said, coldly. "It may be as you say, that your father is in love with my mother, but of one thing I am perfectly sure, she isn't in love with him."

"I never said that she was," said Gypsy, imperturbably. "But I fancy she'll marry him just the same."

My lip curled contemptuously.

"I think you are talking very foolishly," I said. "Why should mother marry Doctor Merrill when she does not care for him?"

"Why? You dear innocent, because he is rich and she is poor," replied Gypsy.

A wild anger, such as I had never felt before, rushed over me. I turned upon her furiously, the hot blood tingling in my cheeks.

"How dare you say such a thing as that?" I cried. "How dare you speak of my mother in that way?"

Gypsy regarded me with wide-open eyes of astonishment.

"Why, Mercy Compton, I never knew before you had such a temper," she exclaimed. "And there's nothing for you to get mad at that I can see. If I don't mind your mamma's marrying my papa for his money I am sure you shouldn't make a to-do about it. Wouldn't you like to leave this dull, lonely place, Mercy, and live in Boston?"

"What you say is an insult to my mother," I said. "I shall not stay here and listen to you," and I turned and left her.

I went upstairs to my room and threw myself across the bed. I had never been so angry in all my life before, and the reaction left me weak and almost faint. I grew calmer, but I was still very indignant with Gypsy.

"How dare you say such a wicked, false thing as that?" I murmured.

After a little while I fell asleep and when I awoke the sun was setting. I sprang up and ran along the corridor to my mother's room. She was standing, with beautiful bare shoulders and arms, before the toilet table, brushing her long, shimmering hair.

I went up to her and laid my cheek caressingly against her white arm.

"I was beginning to wonder what had become of you, child," she said, with a smile.

"I went to my room and fell asleep," I explained.

"How did Gypsy come to go home so soon?" asked my mother. "I thought she would stay all the afternoon."

"I suppose she would if I had not gone away and left her. But she made me very angry, and I would not remain where she was."

My mother turned and regarded me in grave surprise.

"That is very unlike you, Mercy," she said. "I am sorry to hear that you and Gypsy have been quarreling."

"We did not quarrel, mother. I got very angry because Gypsy made an unkind remark about you."

"Really! And pray what did she say?"

"She said that her father was in love with you and that you would marry him, mother, because he was rich."

My mother flushed a little, then she laughed, in a half annoyed, half amused way.

"Miss Gypsy is far too knowing for her years," she said. "Mercy, child," she had grown suddenly grave and she spoke somewhat nervously, "Doctor Merrill asked me to be his wife this afternoon, and I—I consented."

"Mother! Mother!" I had flung myself down at her feet, my face uplifted, my hands clutching at her white draperies.

She looked down upon me for a moment, a startled expression on her face.

"Get up, Mercy," she said at length, petulantly. "What is the matter with you? Your face is positively ghastly. Don't look at me with such big, reproachful eyes. One might think to see you that I had just confessed having committed a crime. I thought you would be glad."

"Glad!" I repeated. "Glad! Oh, mother! mother!"

"Don't keep crying out, 'Mother, mother!' in that remarkable manner," cried my mother, irritably. "Yes; I thought you would be glad. You know how I hate this miserable life of struggle and poverty. As Doctor Merrill's wife I shall have all those things for which I have longed."

"Then Gypsy was right," I cried, wildly. "You are going to marry Doctor Merrill for his money?"

My mother looked at me more coldly than she had ever looked at me in all my life before.

"You forget yourself," she said. "I am not accountable to you for anything I may do. I think you had better go away now. We will speak of this again when you have come to your senses."

Her look and her words went to my heart like the thrust of a knife. I burst into passionate weeping.

"Forgive me," I sobbed. "I cannot bear to have you angry with me; it breaks my heart. You know that I love you better than all the world, that I can know no greater content in life than to see you happy"

My mother's beautiful face cleared. She drew me to her and kissed me.

"Now, dear, it is all right," she said. "Stop that sobbing. No one would ever suspect that you were such an intense, passionate creature, Mercy. I am sure you will not distress me in this way again."

I had grown calm, but I felt weak and shaken and dazed.

"No, mother, I will never distress you again," I replied, and I did not make that promise idly. I knew my own powers of self-control, and I had determined that no matter how I might suffer no one should ever know. For no one, not even my mother, could understand how I felt.

"Now, run away, dear," said my mother, as she turned again to the toilet table. "I must hurry and dress. Doctor Merrill will be here to tea."

I went quietly from the room and from the house. I made my way to the family graveyard at the foot of the garden and knelt down beside my father's grave.

"I wonder if you know?" I murmured, with my cheek pressed close against the cold headstone.

I knelt there for some time. The twilight shadows were beginning to gather thickly when I, at length, arose and went toward the house. My mother and Doctor Merrill were sitting upon the portico. For the moment I was desperately tempted to turn away and go around to the back of the house, but I conquered the temptation and slowly ascended the steps.

My mother turned and called to me:

"Come here, Mercy. Where have you been?"

I went slowly toward them. Doctor Merrill put out his hand and drew me to him.

"Your mother has told you, Mercy, how happy she has made me, has she not?" he asked.

"Yes; she has told me," I replied.

"You will be my daughter and Gypsy's sister," he added, and he drew me still closer and pressed his lips lightly to my forehead.

I suppressed a shudder as the feeling of repulsion, with which he had inspired me the first time I saw him, again swept over me.

"Where have you been, Mercy?" repeated my mother, but she did not wait for me to reply. "You had better go and get your supper. Mammy is keeping it warm for you."

I did not want any supper, but was glad of an excuse to leave them. I went into the house and through to the kitchen. Mammy, who was washing dishes at the dresser, turned as I entered.

"Come, honey, and eat yo' supper. I'se done kept it hot fo' yo'," she said.

I came and stood beside her.

"I don't want any supper, Mammy," I answered.

I felt that she was looking at me curiously, but I did not lift my eyes.

She did not urge me to eat. But she brought me a cup of tea which I drank thirstily.

"Whar you been, honey?" she asked, as she took the cup from me.

"To my father's grave," I replied.

There was silence for a few moments, while mammy's hand gently and tenderly soothed my hair.

"Yo' mammy gwine to marry dat Yankee man, honey," said mammy, at length. "I reckon she done tole yo'?"

"Yes; she has told me," I replied. I was wondering, wearily, how many more would ask me that same question.

Mammy leaned forward so as to look more searchingly into my face. She was evidently puzzled by my apathy.

"Is yo' glad or sorry, honey?" she asked.

I lifted my hand and pushed the heavy hair back from my brow. I was conscious only of extreme physical weariness. I could not think clearly and all mental suffering was numbed.

"It matters nothing whether I am glad or sorry," I murmured. "If my mother is happy that is all I care for."

Mammy shook her head dubiously.

"If de mistis am in lub wid dat thar Yankee man, wid his dark face and dem crooked shoulders, den he done put a spell on her, 'deed he did," she declared.

CHAPTER IV.

It is all over, the wedding, and I stand at the parlor window watching, with wide, aching eyes, the carriage which is bearing my mother away, turning out of the gates on to the turnpike. I wear a white frock with creamy rosebuds twined in my yellow hair.

It all seemed to me like a dream as I stood at my mother's side and listened to the words which made her Doctor Merrill's wife. How lovely she had looked in her soft, pearl-colored gown with pale-tinted roses in her shining hair and on her breast. She had hesitated between the roses and a string of rare costly pearls, one of Doctor Merrill's gifts.

"Wear the roses, mother," I said, as she stood with the pearls in her hand. "They seem to me more appropriate."

"Yes; I fancy you are right," she murmured, as she laid the pearls rather reluctantly back in their case.

I brought the box of hot-house roses, for which Doctor Merrill had sent all the way to Richmond. My mother selected a spray of creamy buds which she twined in my loose hair. Then she drew back and looked at me with a smile.

"Oh, rare pale Margaret," she exclaimed.

The bride and groom started immediately after the wedding for the North. Gypsy and I were to go to Boston under the care of a maid the next day. When the moment of parting came my mother took me in her arms, her lovely eyes full of tears. My eyes were quite dry. I stood very quiet as my mother kissed me passionately and murmured in my ear:

"I shall miss you so, Mercy; we have never been separated before. But it is only for a week, my darling."

A week! The words sounded to me like veriest mockery. She would never be my very own again, the beautiful mother, whom I so intensely loved. Pale and cold and trembling, I clung to her for a moment in silence, then gently put aside her arms and drew back. My mother wiped away her tears and bent to kiss Gypsy.

"I am going to the station with you, mamma," said Gypsy, and I started and winced as the word left her lips. Would they expect me to call Doctor Merrill father, I wondered, indignantly. He was very kind to me, but I shrank from him and shivered under his touch. Was it some premonition of the future, some warning instinct?

The sun was setting as I stood at the window and watched the carriage winding along the gray turnpike until it was lost to view. I had thrown open the window and the chill autumn wind stirred my long hair. Dead leaves covered the lawn, the fields were all bright with golden rod.

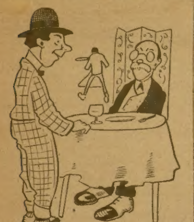
I turned slowly from the window. The long, low room was growing dusky and from the shadows at the further end a man was coming slowly toward me. As the light from the window fell upon him I saw that he was marvelously handsime, stalwart, broad-shouldered, straight-limbed, with a blonde face of irresistible charm. His superb dark blue eyes were fixed upon me with a half smiling look of interest. I aroused myself and moved forward a few steps.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "The servants at The Manor sent me here. I am Julian Merrill, Doctor Merrill's brother."

I stared at him in astonishment.

The Ledger of next week will contain further chapters of this highly interesting story, developing a very extraordinary situation. The patterns and cameras offered to all subscribers free are announced on pages thirteen and fifteen.

What's The Hurry?



"Hello, old man. Do you eat here?"

"I don't know yet. I've only been here an hour and the waiter hasn't noticed me."

Terrible Fate.

Parrot—What is the matter with the monkey?

Owl—He thinks he is going to die. Great believer in transmigration, you know.

Parrot—What of that?

Owl—Why, he is afraid he'll return to earth in the shape of a dude.

FREE
A NEW CURE FOR
KIDNEY and BLADDER
Diseases, Rheumatism, etc.

Disorders of the Kidneys and Bladder cause Bright's Disease, Rheumatism, Gravel, Pain in the Back, Bladder Disorders, difficult or too frequent passing of water, Dropsy, etc. For these diseases a Positive Specific Cure is found in a new botanical discovery, the wonderful Kava-Kava Shrub, called by botanists, the piper methysticum, from the Ganges River, East India. It has the extraordinary record of 1,200 hospital cures in 30 days. It acts directly on the Kidneys, and cures by draining out of the Blood the poisonous Uric Acid, Lithates, etc., which cause the disease.

Rev. John H. Watson, testifies in the New York World, that it has saved him from the edge of the grave when dying of Kidney disease and terrible suffering when passing water. Mr. Calvin G. Bliss, North Brookfield, Mass., testifies to his cure of long standing Rheumatism. Mr. Jos. Whitten, of Wolfboro, N. H., at the age of eighty-five, writes of his cure of Dropsy and swelling of the feet, Kidney disorder and Urinary difficulty. Many ladies, including Mrs. C. C. Fowler, Locktown, N. J., and Mrs. Sarah Tharp, Montclair, Ind., also testify to its wonderful curative power in Kidney and allied disorders peculiar to womanhood.

That you may test the value of this great discovery we will send you by mail Free, One Large Case and our book of 1000 testimonials, only asking that when cured yourself you will recommend this sure specific to others. Address, The Church Kidney Cure Co., 484 Fourth Avenue, New York City.

THE REPENTANT WIFE.

BY PHILIP BEAUFOY.

"Five years ago tonight!"

Doctor Basil Graham sat beside the waning fire in his big study, and peered into the ruddy depths. What did he see that caused him to gaze there with such intent eyes?

He saw a house in a city street, and within that house a girl—sweet, winsome, adorable. He saw a man at her feet, heard him murmur words of love, heard her whisper, "Yes," while the man's eyes lighted up with ineffable joy.

The embers fell and another picture burned into the doctor's brain. He saw another house in another street—desolate, empty, grief-stricken—a house whence the woman had flown, leaving black sorrow and tears behind her. And Basil Graham knew that the woman was Mabel, his wife, and that the man was himself, her broken-hearted husband.

Five years ago she had vanished from his home after a brief wedded life. She had gone without a word of explanation, and he had been forced to the bitter conclusion that she had flown with some man for whom she had conceived a sudden and perhaps overwhelming affection.

All search had proved useless. Had the grave closed over Mabel Graham she could not have been more effectually hidden from the man into whose life she had come with such wondrous joy, and out of whose existence she had gone with such tragic abruptness.

He had told himself that henceforth life could hold no further joy for him. But for his work, he would in all probability have sought refuge in the everlasting sleep that lurked within the phials of his office, but, fortunately, the man's devotion to his profession held him back, and turned his thoughts toward the path of life.

Five years had passed away. Five years had borne him along the dreary highway of existence, and long since he had put aside all hopes of meeting his wife again on earth. He told himself that he must tread his lonely way until death wrote the word "finis" at the foot of his life's history.

Tonight, on this most bitter anniversary, he sat in the gloomy study, pondering the events of his past life, and asking himself with strange persistence the old, old question:

"Why had Mabel left him?"

"Once I believed that there was some other man," he murmured, "but I have tried to battle with that terrible belief and to dismiss it from my brain."

The doctor arose, and going to the bookshelf, took from it a volume and began to read. Hardly had he settled in his chair when a loud knock resounded through the quiet house.

A servant entered and informed him that a lady desired to see him.

"A patient, I suppose," said Graham, mechanically. "Show her in here."

The man quitted the apartment, returning in a minute with a tall, closely-veiled woman.

"What can I do for you, madam?" he queried, motioning her to a chair.

"Doctor, I cannot sit down, for there is no time to lose."

"You wish me to return with you?" he asked, quickly.

"Yes; a lady who resides in the same house with myself has been taken ill, and I volunteered to nurse her. She seems worse tonight, and I was about to send for the doctor who had already attended her, when she called me to her bedside and said: 'Bring Doctor Graham of Harley street. I have something to say to him.'"

"I will come at once," cried the doctor, as hope and fear subtly mingled in his brain. The hope took the form of a belief that the sick woman might be his wife—the fear, lest she might die in the very hour of meeting.

A cab was waiting at the door. The doctor and his companion entered the vehicle and were rapidly driven in the direction of a northern suburb. After some twenty-five minutes' journey, the cab drew up at the door of a somewhat dingy house and the veiled woman touched Doctor Graham on the arm.

"This is the place," she said, in a low voice. "Pray Heaven we may not be too late."

A sharp ring at the bell brought a slatternly maid servant to the door.

"How is Miss Everston?" asked the woman, quickly.

"She seems about the same," replied the girl, casting a hurried glance at the door.

The latter seemed to have been struck by the name of "Everston," and as he went up the stairs his brain was sorely puzzled.

"Everston, Everston," he pondered; "where have I heard that name before?"

Further reflection was cut short by the arrival of the physician and his guide at the room where the dying woman lay. A dull oil lamp served to deepen rather than relieve the black gloom of the apartment, and it was with difficulty that Doctor Graham was able to gaze upon the features of the patient. Then a low, quivering cry escaped his lips.

"Mary!" he exclaimed, as his heart beat like a steam hammer.

"Yes," replied a feeble voice. "It is I, Basil Graham, and I know that I am going fast. I have not sent for you to tend me as a patient, for I know that I am beyond all human skill."

"Why, then, have you asked me to come?" asked Graham, in a low voice.

"Because I have something to tell you before I die—a secret which I must not carry with me to the grave."

Then, perceiving that the veiled woman was standing close at hand, she made a gesture signifying that she wished her to quit the rom. A moment later they were alone.

There was a long pause, and then the woman raised her head and looked him steadfastly in the face.

"Do you remember," she said, huskily, "that seven years ago you and I were engaged to be married?"

"I remember the fact now," he made answer, "though until this night it had been driven from my brain by other and more recent events."

"Very well. If your memory serves you aright you will call to mind that you broke off the engagement because certain scandalous doings of mine came to your ears?"

"Yes, yes; I remember."

"I was guilty of those acts, and you did right to break with me," went on the feeble voice, "but all the same I did not think so at the time. I hated you for humiliating me, and I swore that if ever the time came when I might take vengeance, I would not spare you."

"Go on," said the doctor.

"The opportunity arrived when you married. I heard from a friend that you were devoted to your wife and that you were supremely happy. I was living in Wilmington at the time and was unable to come to New York to plot against your peace of mind; but I had in my possession certain letters of yours addressed to me, bearing no dates. I put half a dozen of those letters in an envelope, dated them with dates which would correspond to several months after your marriage, and sent them with an anonymous communication to your wife—a woman whom I had never seen, but whom I hated for having married you."

"You fiend!" Graham was about to exclaim, but remembering that she was trembling on the brink of death, he repressed the cry that arose to his lips, and merely said again, "Go on."

"There is little more to tell. The next news that reached me concerning you was that your wife had gone away, and that your home was desolate. I rejoiced with all my heart at the time, but since then I have bitterly repented my wickedness, for life has been nothing but misery to me, and I have been punished, heavily punished."

She was growing weaker. The words left her thin lips with painful slowness. It did not require the experienced eye of the physician to perceive that the end was near.

"Do you—do you know where my wife is?" he asked, when he had mastered his emotion sufficiently to find speech.

"No; how should I? Remember that I never saw her in my life, and should not know her if she stood before me at this minute."

Doctor Graham saw the gray shadows which proclaim the end of all things steal over the white face, and looking into those shadows, it seemed to him that they symbolized the gray misery that this woman had brought into his life. Was it destined that his existence must remain thus shadowed until life closed for ever and ever?

Even as the thought raced through his brain, there came a quiver of the lips, and the dying woman raised her head feebly.

"Can you—can you forgive me?" she asked, feebly.

"I forgive you," he replied, simply, and so, with the noble words of forgiveness ringing in her dull ears, Mary Everston's soul went out on its last journey.

The doctor, with mechanical fingers, drew the sheet over the rigid face, and then turned toward the door.

"That woman has wrecked my life," he murmured, "but I would pardon all if my darling wife could come back to me at this moment—could put her hand in mine and whisper, 'Husband, take me home.'"

Look! Is he awake or is he dreaming? for a silent figure has crept out of the dark passage toward him, and has thrown itself at his feet, sobbing out, brokenly:

"Husband, take me home!"

Well-nigh mad with amazement and delight, Basil Graham raised the kneeling woman and looked into her face.

"Oh, Mabel, my darling, my darling! At last, at last!"

When both of them were somewhat calmer, Mabel told him what had happened. How she had roomed with Mary Everston in a cheap lodging house, little dreaming that she was the woman who had worked so much havoc in her life; how when Mary fell ill the latter had begged her to bring Graham to her side; how she had veiled her face closely so that her husband might not recognize her; and lastly, how the dying woman's confession, which she had overheard, had proved to her beyond all doubt that Basil was true to her after all.

"But for that confession, Basil," she murmured, softly, "we should have remained apart until the end."

Then a sudden fear seemed to assail her heart, and she said, tremulously,

"Basil, it was wicked of me to leave you as I did, without asking you for an explanation. Time after time have I repented my wicked rashness, but pride held me from coming back to you. Can you—can you forgive me?"

"I love you," he replied, huskily; "that is enough."

Thus was she answered—thus did a noble heart speak its message of forgiveness.

And that night Doctor Graham's lonely house was lighted by the presence of a face which cast a new glamour over all things, and the wanderer who had strayed for so many weary years crept back into the heart which was her refuge, her solace, and her home.

To Hollow Out.

A teacher had been explaining the word "excavate" to her pupils. She defined it as meaning "to hollow out." Shortly afterward she asked for sentences illustrating its use. From one little girl she got the following: "Our baby excavates whenever he is hurt."

◆

Man likes to believe in eternal punishment—for the other fellow.

CUBS' FOOD.

They Thrive on Grape-Nuts.

Healthy babies don't cry and the well nourished baby that is fed on Grape-Nuts is never a crying baby. Many babies who cannot take any other food relish the perfect food Grape-Nuts and get well.

"My little baby was given up by three doctors who said that the condensed milk on which I had fed it had ruined the child's stomach. One of the doctors told me that the only thing to do would be to try Grape-Nuts, so I got some and prepared it as follows: I soaked 1½ tablespoonfuls in one pint of cold water for half an hour then I strained off the liquid and mixed 12 tablespoonfuls of this strained Grape-Nuts juice with six tablespoonfuls of rich milk, put in a pinch of salt and a little sugar, warmed it and gave it to baby every two hours.

"In this simple, easy way I saved baby's life and have built her up to a strong healthy child, rosy and laughing. The food must certainly be perfect to have such a wonderful effect as this. I can truthfully say I think it is the best food in the world to raise delicate babies on and is also a delicious healthful food for grown-ups as we have discovered in our family." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Grape-Nuts is equally valuable to the strong healthy man or woman.

Grape-Nuts food stands for the true theory of health.

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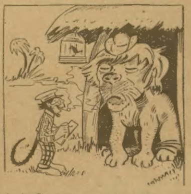
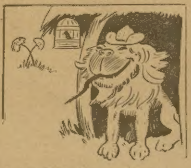
Accommodated.



1. Chatters—I'm reporting for the Jungle Gazette, visiting the homes of the great and getting up a series of articles on "Aristocratic Interiors." Could you oblige me with a view?



2. Leo—Sure! Look for yourself

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE HEALING.
ONE MILLION CURED CASES.
You Can Be Cured Whether You Believe in Christian Science or Not.

Over a million cases of disease in every form are now to the credit of Christian Science Healing. Most of these were cases that the doctors had given up as "incurable." Many more were chronic maladies that had baffled their skill for years. All were quickly cured; some were cured instantly. The evidence on these facts is simply indisputable and the curing still goes on. There can be no mistake or misstatement about it. The healers and their work are in public view. As a C. S. healer my many marvelous cures have startled the world. During the past 12 years I have healed diseases of almost every known kind and in every stage of severity. They included many surgical cases where operations were otherwise threatened. I cured cases that were far away from me, as well as those near at hand. And I tell you in like manner that wherever you may dwell, whether one or many physicians have failed to give you relief, if you report the case to me and so desire, you shall be cured. This is no vain or idle promise. My past success fully justifies it. You can be cured whether you believe in Christian Science or not. You can be cured whether in this city or thousands of miles away from me. In our Christian Science Healing distance is of no account; disbelief is not any hindrance; disappointments of the past only make stronger grounds for hope. All you really need is the wish to be healed.

I have just published a little book in regard to this blessed truth called "A Message of Health and Healing." If you write to me I will gladly send you a copy free. It gives many interesting facts and convincing testimonials. Enclose 2-cent stamp for postage. S. A. Jefferson, C. S. B., Suite 604, 112 Dearborn street, Chicago, Ill.

Two Points of View.

Wife—How people gaze at my new dress! I presume they wonder if I've been shopping in Paris.

Husband—More likely they wonder if I've been robbing a bank.

The Blazed Trail

Or, Struggling for Gold

BY STEWART EDWARD WHITE.

(Copyright, 1902, by the author.)

Begun in No. 38, Sept. 19. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be procured from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN COURT.

Scotty established his guard over the river gates as directed by Thorpe, but he did not need to shoot anybody. Daly himself came down to investigate the state of affairs. He attempted to parley, but Scotty would have none of it.

"Get out!" was his first and last word.

At the mouth of the river, booms of logs chained together at the ends had been prepared. Into the enclosure the drive was floated and stopped. Then a raft was formed by passing new manila ropes over the logs, to each one of which the line was fastened by a hard wood pin driven astride of it. A tug dragged the raft to Marquette.

Now Thorpe was summoned legally on two counts. First, Judge Sherman cited him for contempt of court. Second, Morris & Daly sued him for alleged damages in obstructing their drive for holding open the dam-sluice beyond the legal head of water.

Pending the call of trial, Thorpe took a three weeks' vacation to visit his sister. Time, filled with excitement and responsibility, had erased from his mind the bitterness of their parting. Now he found himself so impatient that he could hardly wait to get there.

He learned on his arrival that she was not at home. Mrs. Renwick proved not nearly so cordial as the year before; but Thorpe, absorbed in his eagerness, did not notice it. Mrs. Renwick thought Helen had gone over to the Hughes.

Thorpe found the Hughes residence without difficulty, and turned up the straight walk to the veranda. On the steps of the latter a rug had been spread. A dozen youths and maidens lounged on its soft surface. Thorpe, as he approached the light from a tall lamp, just inside the hall, hesitated, vainly trying to make out the figures before him.

So it was that Helen Thorpe saw him first and came fluttering to meet him.

"Oh, Harry! What a surprise!" she cried, and flung her arms about his neck to kiss him.

"How do you do, Helen?" he replied, sedately.

This was the meeting he had anticipated so long. The presence of others brought out in him, irresistibly, the repression of public display which was so strong as an element of his career.

A little chilled, Helen turned to introduce him to her friends. He took a place on the steps and sat without saying a word all the evening. There was nothing for him to say. These young people talked thoughtlessly, as young people do, of the affairs belonging to their own little circle. He had thought pine and forest and the trail so long, that he found these square-elbowed subjects refusing to be jostled aside by any trivialities.

He took Helen back to Mrs. Renwick's about ten o'clock. They walked slowly beneath the broad-leaved maples, whose shadows danced under the tall electric lights—and talked.

"How have you done, Harry?" she inquired, anxiously. "Your letters have been so vague."

"Pretty well," he replied. "If things go right, I hope some day to have a better place for you than this."

Her heart contracted suddenly. It was all she could do to keep from bursting into tears. The indefiniteness of his answer exasperated her and filled her with sullen despair. She said nothing for twenty steps. Then:

"Harry," she said, quietly, "can you take me away from Mrs. Renwick's?"

"I don't know, Helen. I can't tell yet. Not just yet, at any rate."

"Harry," she cried, "you don't know what you're doing. I tell you I can't stand Mrs. Renwick any longer. I know you've worked hard, and that you'd give me more, if you could. But so have I worked hard. Now we ought to change this in some way. I can get a position as teacher, or some other work somewhere. Won't you let me do that?"

Thorpe was thinking that it would be easy enough to obtain Wallace Carpenter's consent to his taking a thousand dollars from the profits of the year. But he knew also that the struggle in the courts might need every cent the new company could spare. It would look much better were he to wait until after the verdict. If favorable, there would be no difficulty about sparing the money. If adverse, there would be no money to spare. And so, until the thing was absolutely certain, he hesitated to explain the situation to Helen for fear of disappointing her.

"I think you'd better wait, Helen," said he. "There'll be time enough for all that later when it becomes necessary."

"And in the meantime stay with Mrs. Renwick?" flashed Helen.

"Yes; I hope it will not have to be for very long."

"How long do you think, Harry?" pleaded the girl.

"That depends on circumstances," replied Thorpe.

"Harry," she ventured, after a time, "why not write to Uncle Amos? His wanting us to come to him seems to me very generous."

"You will do nothing of the kind," commanded Thorpe, sternly. "Amos Thorpe is an unscrupulous man who became unscrupulously rich. He deliberately used our father as a tool, and then destroyed him. I consider that any one of our family who would have anything to do with him is a traitor."

The girl did not reply.

Next morning Thorpe felt uneasily repentant for his strong language. After all, the girl did lead a monotonous life, and he could not blame her for rebelling against it from time to time. Her remarks had been born of the rebellion; they had meant nothing in themselves. He could not doubt for a moment her loyalty to the family.

That night he wrote Wallace Carpenter for a thousand dollars.

Wallace Carpenter was not in town. Before the letter had followed him to his new address, and the answer had returned, a week had passed. Of course the money was gladly put at Thorpe's disposal. The latter at once interviewed his sister.

"Helen," he said, "I have made arrangements for some money. What would you like to do this year?"

She raised her head and looked at him with clear, bright gaze. If he could so easily raise the money, why had he not done so before? He knew how much she wanted it. Her happiness did not count. Only when his quixotic ideas of family honor were attacked did he bestir himself.

"I am going to Uncle Amos'," she replied, distinctly.

"What?" asked Thorpe, incredulously.

For answer she pointed to a letter lying open on the table. Thorpe took it and read:

"My Dear Niece: Both Mrs. Thorpe and myself more than rejoice that time and reflection have removed that, I must confess, natural prejudice which the unfortunate family affair, to which I will not allude, raised in your mind against us. As we said long ago, our home is yours when you may wish to make it so. You state your present readiness to come immediately. Unless you wire to the contrary, we shall expect you next Tuesday evening on the four-forty train. I shall be at the Central Station myself to meet you. If your brother is now with you, I should be pleased to see him also, and will be most happy to give him a position with the firm. Affectionately, your uncle, Amos Thorpe.

"New York, June 6, 1883."

On finishing the last paragraph the reader crumpled the letter and threw it into the grate.

"I am sorry that you did that, Helen," said he, "but I don't blame you, and it can't be helped. We won't need to take advantage of his 'kind offer' now."

"I intend to do so, however," replied the girl, coldly.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," she cried, "that I am sick of waiting on your good pleasure. I waited and slaved and stood unbearable things for two years. I did it cheerfully. And in return I don't get a civil word, not a decent explanation, not even a—caress," she fairly sobbed out the last word. "I can't stand it any longer. I have tried and tried and tried, and then when I've come to you for the littlest word of encouragement, you have told me I was young and ought to finish my education. You haven't a cent when it is a question of what I want, but you raise money quick enough when your old family is insulted. Isn't it my family, too? And then you blame me because, after waiting in vain two years for you to do something, I start out to do the best I can for myself. I'm not of age, but you're not my guardian."

During this long speech Thorpe had stood motionless, growing paler and paler. Like most noble natures, when absolutely in the right, he was incapable of defending himself against misunderstandings.

"You know that is not true, Helen," he replied, almost sternly.

"It is true," she asseverated, "and I'm through."

"It's a little hard," said Thorpe, passing his hand wearily before his eyes, "to work hard this way for years and then——"

She laughed with a hard little note of scorn.

"Helen," said Thorpe, with new energy, "I forbid you to have anything to do with Amos Thorpe. I think he is a scoundrel and a sneak."

"I shall do as I please," she replied, crossing her hands behind her.

Thorpe's eyes darkened.

"We have talked this over a great many times," he warned, "and you've always agreed with me. Remember, you owe something to the family."

"Most of the family seems to owe something," she replied, with a flippant laugh. "I'm sure I didn't choose the family. If I had, I'd have picked out a better one."

"You may take your choice, Helen," he said, formally. "If you go into the household of Amos Thorpe, if you deliberately prefer your comfort to your honor, we will have nothing more in common."

They faced each other with the cool, deadly glance of the race, so similar in appearance but so unlike in nature.

"I, too, offer you a home, such as it is," repeated the man. "Choose!"

At the mention of the home for which means were so quickly forthcoming when Thorpe, not she, considered it needful, the girl's eyes flashed. She stooped and dragged violently from beneath the bed a flat steamer trunk, the lid of which she threw open. A dress lay on the bed. With a fine gesture she folded the garment and laid it in the bottom of the trunk. Then she knelt, and without another glance at her brother standing rigid at the door, began feverishly to arrange the folds.

The choice was made. He turned and went out.

CHAPTER XX.

With Thorpe there could be no half-way measure. He saw that the rupture with his sister was final, and the thrust was given him in one of his few unprotected points. At first the spring of his life seemed broken. He did not care for money; and at present disappointment had numbered his interest in the game. It seemed hardly worth the candle.

Then in a few days he began to look about him mentally. Unconsciously the combative instinct aroused. In lack of other object on which to expend itself, Thorpe's fighting spirit turned with energy to the subject of the lawsuit.

After his sister left the Renwicks Thorpe himself went to Detroit, where he interviewed at once Northrop, the brilliant young lawyer, whom the firm had engaged to defend its case.

"I'm afraid we have no show," he replied to Thorpe's question. "You see, you fellows were on the wrong side of the fence in trying to enforce the law yourselves. Of course, you may well say that justice was all on your side. That does not count. The only recourse recognized for injustice lies in the law courts. I'm afraid you are due to lose your case."

"Well," said Thorpe, "they can't prove much damage."

"I don't expect that they will be able to procure a very heavy judgment," replied Northrop. "The facts I shall be able to adduce will cut down damages. But the costs will be very heavy."

"Yes," agreed Thorpe.

"And," then pursued Northrop, with a dry smile, "they practically own Sherman. You may be in for contempt of court—at their instigation. As I understand it, they are trying rather to injure you than to get anything out of it themselves."

"That's it," nodded Thorpe.

"In other words, it's a case for compromise."

"Just what I wanted to get at," said Thorpe, with satisfaction. "Now, answer me a question. Suppose a man injures Government or State land by trespass. The land is afterward bought by another party. Has the latter any claim for damage against the trespasser? Understand me, the purchaser bought after the trespass was committed."

"Certainly," answered Northrop, without hesitation. "Provided suit is brought within six years of the time the trespass was committed."

"Good! Now, see here. These M. & D. people stole about a section of Government pine up on that river, and I don't believe they've bought in the land it stood on. In fact, I don't believe they suspect that any one knows they've been stealing. How would it do, if I were to buy that section at the land office and threaten to sue them for the value of the pine that originally stood on it?"

The lawyer's eyes glimmered behind the lenses of his pince-nez.

"It would do very well, indeed," he replied, "but you'd have to prove they did the cutting and you'll have to pay experts to estimate the probable amount of the timber. How much, on a broad guess, would you estimate the timber to come to?"

"There ought to be about eight or ten million," guessed Thorpe, after an instant's silence, "worth in the stump anywhere from sixteen to twenty thousand dollars. It would cost me only eight hundred to buy it."

"Do so, by all means. Get your documents and evidence all in shape, and let me have them. I'll see that the suit is discontinued then."

The next day Thorpe took the train north. By the time he had bought the sixteen forties constituting the section, searched out a dozen witnesses to the theft, and spent a week with the Marquette expert in looking over the ground, he had fallen into the swing of work again. His experience still ached; but dully.

Only now he possessed no interests outside of those in the new country; no affections save the half-protecting, good-natured comradeship with Wallace, the mutual self-restraint respect that subsisted between Tim Shearer and himself, and the dumb, unreasoning dog-liking he shared with Indian Charley. His eye became clearer and steadier; his methods more simple and direct. The taciturnity of his mood redoubled in thickness. He was less charitable to failure on the part of subordinates. And the new firm on the Ossawinamakee prospered.

CHAPTER XXI.

Five years passed.

In that time Thorpe had succeeded in cutting a hundred million feet of pine. The money received for this had all been turned back into the company's funds. From a single camp of twenty-five men the concern had increased to six large, well-equipped communities of eighty to a hundred men apiece, using nearly two hundred horses, and hauling as far as eight or nine miles.

Near the port stood a mammoth sawmill capable of taking care of twenty-two million feet a year, about which a lumber town had sprung up. Besides its original holdings, the company had acquired about a hundred and fifty million more, back near the headwaters of the Ossawinamakee.

During the four years in which the Morrison & Daly Company shared the stream with Thorpe, the two firms lived in complete amity and understanding. Northrop had played his cards skilfully. The older capitalists had withdrawn suit. Afterwards they kept scrupulously within their rights and saw to it that no more careless openings were left for Thorpe's shrewdness.

And as the younger man, on his side, never attempted to overstep his own rights, the interests of the rival firms rarely clashed. As to the few disputes that did arise, Thorpe found Mr. Daly singularly anxious to please. In the desire was no friendliness, however. Thorpe was watchful for treachery, and could hardly believe the affair finished when at the end of the fourth year the M. & D. transferred its operations to another stream a few miles east.

"They're altogether too confounded anxious to help us on that freight, Wallace," said Thorpe, wrinkling his brow, uneasily. "I don't like it. It isn't natural."

Thorpe's Camp One was celebrated in three states. Thorpe had set out to gather around him a band of good woodsmen. Except on a pinch he would employ no others.

"I don't care if I get in only two thousand feet this winter, and if a boy does that," he answered Shearer's expostulations, "it's got to be a good boy."

The result of his policy began to show even in the second year. Men were a little proud to say that they had put in a winter at "Thorpe's One." Those who had worked there during the first year were loyally enthusiastic. As they were authorities, others perforce had to accept the dictum. There grew a desire among the better class to see what Thorpe's "One" might be like. In the autumn Harry had more applicants than he knew what to do with. Eighteen of the old men returned. He took them all, but when it came to distribution, three found themselves assigned to one or the other of the new camps. And quietly the rumor gained that these three had shown the least willing spirit during the previous winter.

Tim Shearer was foreman of Camp One; Scotty Parsons was drafted from the veterans to take charge of Two; Thorpe engaged two men known to Tim to boss Three and Four. But in selecting the "push" for Five he sought out John Radway and induced him to accept the commission.

"You can do it, John," said he, "and I know it. I want you to try; and if you don't make her go, I'll call it nobody's fault but my own."

The result proved his sagacity. Radway was one of the best foremen in the outfit. He got more out of his men, he rose better to emergencies, and he accomplished more with the same resources than any of the others, excepting Tim Shearer. As long as the work was done for some one else, he was capable and efficient. Only when he was called upon to demand on his own account, did the paralyzing shyness affect him.

Wallace was always personally agreeable to Thorpe. Latterly, since the erection of the mill, he had developed unexpected acumen in the disposal of the season's cut to wholesale dealers in Chicago. Thereafter he was often in the woods, both for pleasure and to get his partner's ideas on what the firm would have to offer. The entire responsibility of the city end of the business was in his hands.

Indian Charley continued to hunt and trap in the country round about. Once or twice a month the lumberman would snowshoe down to the little cabin at the forks. Entering, he would nod briefly and seat himself on a cracker box.

"How do, Charley?"

"How do?" replied Charley.

They filled pipes and smoked. At rare intervals one of them made a remark, tersely.

"Catch um beaver las' week," remarked Charley.

"Good haul?" commented Thorpe. Or:

"I saw a mink track by the big boulder," offered Thorpe.

"H'm!" responded Charley, in a long-drawn falsetto whine.

Yet somehow the men came to know each other better and better; and each felt that in an emergency he could depend on the other to the uttermost in spite of the difference in race.

As for Philip, he was like some strange, shy animal, retaining all its wild instincts, but led by affection to become domestic. He drew the water, cut the wood—none better. In the evening he played atrociously his violin—none worse—bending his great white brow forward with the wolf-glare in his eyes, swaying his shoulders with a fierce delight in the subtle dissonances of the horrible tunes he played. And often he went into the forest and gazed wondering at occult things. Above all, he worshipped Thorpe. And in turn the lumberman accorded him a good-natured affection.

Financially the company was rated high, and yet was heavily in debt. This condition of affairs by no means constitutes an anomaly in the lumbering business.

The profits of the first five years had been immediately reinvested in the business. Thorpe intended to establish in a few years more a big plant which would be returning benefices in proportion not only to the capital originally invested, but also in ratio to the energy, time, and genius he had himself expended.

Every autumn the company found itself suddenly in easy circumstances. At any moment that Thorpe had chosen to be content with the progress made he could have, so to speak, declared dividends with his partner. Instead of undertaking more improvements, for part of which he borrowed some money, he could have divided the profits of the season's cut. But this he was not yet ready to do.

He had established five more camps, he had acquired over a hundred and fifty million more of timber lying contiguous to his own, he had built and equipped a modern, high-efficiency mill, he had constructed a harbor breakwater and the necessary booms, he had bought a tug, built a boarding house. All this cost money. He wished now to construct a logging railroad. Then he promised himself and Wallace that they would be ready to commence paying operations. He had made all the estimates, and even the preliminary survey. He was therefore the more grievously disappointed, when Wallace Carpenter made it impossible for him to do so.

It was about the middle of July. He was sitting back idly in the clean painted mill office with the big square desk and the three chairs. Through the door he could see Collins perched on a high stool before the shelf-like desk. From the open window came the clear, musical note of the circular saw, the fresh aromatic smell of new lumber, the bracing air from Superior sparkling in the offing. He felt tired. In rare moments such as these, when the muscles of his striving relaxed, his mind turned to the past. Old sorrows rose before him and looked at him with their sad eyes. He wondered where his sister was. She would be twenty-two years old now. A tenderness, haunting, tearful, invaded his heart. At such moments the hard shell of his rough woods life seemed to rend apart. He longed with a great longing for sympathy, for love.

The outer door, beond the cage behind which Collins and his shelf desk were placed, flew open. Thorpe heard a brief greeting, and Wallace Carpenter stood before him.

"Why, Wallace, I didn't know you were coming," began Thorpe, and stopped. The boy, usually so fresh and happily buoyant, looked ten years older. Wrinkles had gathered between his eyes. "Why, what's the matter?" cried Thorpe.

He rose and swiftly shut the door into the outer office. Wallace seated himself mechanically.

"Everything! everything!" he said, in despair. "I've been a fool! I've been blind!"

So bitter was his tone that Thorpe was startled. The lumberman sat down on the other side of the desk.

"That'll do, Wallace," he said, sharply. "Tell me briefly what is the matter."

"I've been speculating," burst out the boy.

"Ah!" said his partner.

"I bought on a margin. There came a slump. I met the margins because I am sure there will be a rally, but now all my fortune is in the thing. I'm going to be penniless. I'll lose it all."

"Ah!" said Thorpe.

"And the name of Carpenter is so old-established, so honorable!" cried the unhappy boy; "and my sister!"

"Easy!" warned Thorpe. "Being penniless isn't the worst thing that can happen to a man."

"No; but I am in debt," went on the boy, more calmly. "I have given notes. When they come due, I'm a goner."

"How much?" asked Thorpe, laconically.

"Thirty thousand dollars."

"Well, you have that amount in this firm."

"What do you mean?"

"If you want it, you can have it."

Wallace considered a moment.

"That would leave me without a cent," he replied.

"But it would save your commercial honor."

"Harry!" cried Wallace, suddenly, "could this firm go on my note for thirty thousand more? Its credit is good, and that amount would save my margins."

"You are partner," replied Thorpe, "your signature is as good as mine in this firm."

"But you know I wouldn't do it without your consent," replied Wallace, reproachfully. "Oh, Harry!" cried the boy, "when you needed the amount I let you have it."

Thorpe smiled.

"You know you can have it, if it's to be had, Wallace. I wasn't hesitating on that account. I was merely trying to figure out where we can raise such a sum as sixty thousand dollars. We haven't got it."

"But you'll never have to pay it," assured Wallace, eagerly. "If I can save my margins, I'll be all right."

"A man has to figure on paying whatever he puts his signature to," asserted Thorpe. "I can give you our note payable at the end of a year. Then I'll hustle in enough timber to make up the amount. It means we don't get our railroad, that's all."

"I knew you'd help me out. Now it's all right," said Wallace, with a relieved air.

Thorpe shook his head. He was already trying to figure how to increase his cut to thirty million feet.

"I'll do it," he muttered to himself, after Wallace had gone out to visit the mill. "I've been demanding success of others for a good many years; now, I'll demand it of myself."

CHAPTER XXII.

The moment had struck for the woman. Thorpe did not know it, but it was true. A solitary, brooding life in the midst of grand surroundings, an active, strenuous life among great responsibilities, a starved, hungry life of the affections whence even the sister had withdrawn her love—all these had worked unobtrusively toward the formation of a single psychological condition. Such a moment comes to every man. Then is happiness and misery beside which the mere struggle to dominate men becomes trivial, the petty striving with the forces of nature a little thing. And the woman he at that time meets is more than a woman, she is the best of that man made visible.

Thorpe found himself for the first time filled with the spirit of restlessness. His customary iron evenness of temper was gone, so that he wandered quickly from one detail of his work to another, without seeming to penetrate below the surface-need of any one task. But a week before, he had felt himself absorbed in the component parts of his enterprise. Now, he was outside of it. Thorpe took this state of mind much to heart, and combated it. Invariably he held himself to his task. By an effort, a tremendous effort, he succeeded in doing so. The effort left him limp. He found himself often standing, or moving gently, his eyes staring sightless, his will chained so softly and yet so firmly that he felt no strength and hardly the desire to break from the dream that lulled him. Then he was conscious of the physical warmth of the sun, the faint sweet woods smells, the soothing caress of the breeze, the sleepy cicada-like note of the pine creeper. He wanted nothing so much as to sit on the pine needles there in the golden flood of radiance, and dream—dream on—vaguely, comfortably, sweetly.

"Lord, Lord!" he cried, impatiently. "What's coming to me? I must be a little off my feed!"

And he hurried rapidly to his duties. After an hour of the hardest concentration he had ever been required to bestow on a trivial subject, he again unconsciously sank by degrees into the old apathy.

"Glad it isn't the busy season," he commented to himself. "Here, I must quit this! Guess it's the warm weather. I'll get down to the mill for a day or two."

There he found himself incapable of even the most petty routine work. He sat at his desk at eight o'clock and began the perusal of a sheaf of letters. The first three he read carefully; the following two rather hurriedly; of the next one he seized only the salient and essential points; the seventh and eighth he skimmed; the remainder of the bundle he thrust aside in uncontrollable impatience. Next day he returned to the woods.

The incident of the letters had aroused to the full his old fighting spirit, before which no mere instincts could stand.

Once more his mental process became clear and incisive, his commands direct and to the point. To all outward appearance Thorpe was as before.

He opened Camp One and the Fighting Forty came back from distant drinking joints. This was early in September. That able-bodied and devoted band of men was on hand when needed. Shearer, in some subtle manner of his own, had let them feel that this year meant thirty millions or "bust." They tightened their leather belts and stood ready for commands. After much discussion with Shearer the young man decided to take out the logs from eleven by driving them down French Creek.

To this end a gang was put to clearing the creek bed. It was a tremendous job. Centuries of forest life had chocked the little stream nearly to the level of its banks. Old snags and stumps lay imbedded in the ooze; decayed trunks, moss-grown, blocked the current; leaning tamaracks, fallen timber, tangled vines, dense thickets gave to its course more the appearance of a tropical jungle than of a north country brook-bed. All these things had to be removed, one by one, and either piled to one side or burned. In the end, however, it would pay. French Creek was not a large stream, but it could be driven during the time of the spring freshets.

Each night the men returned in the beautiful dream-like twilight to the camp. There they sat, after eating, smoking their pipes in the open air. Much of the time they sang while Phil, crouching wolf-like over his violin, rasped out an accompaniment of dissonances. The men's voices lent themselves well to the weird minor strains of the chanteys. These times—when the men sang, and the night-wind rose and died in the hemlock tops—were Thorpe's worst moments. His soul, tired with the day's iron struggle, fell to brooding. He wanted something—he knew not what.

The men were singing in a mighty chorus, swaying their heads in unison, and bringing out with a roar the emphatic words of the crude ditties written by some genius from their own ranks:

"Come all ye sons of freedom throughout
old Michigan,
Come all ye gallant lumbermen, list to a
shanty man.
On the banks of the Muskegon, where the
rapid waters flow,
OH! we'll range the wild woods o'er while
a-lumbering we go."

Here was the bold unabashed front of the pioneer, here was absolute certainty in the superiority of his calling—absolute scorn of all others. Thorpe passed his hand across his brow. The same spirit was once fully and freely his.

"The music of our burnished ax shall make
the woods resound,
And many of lofty ancient pine will tum-
ble to the ground.
At night around our shanty fire we'll sing
while rude winds blow,
OH! we'll range the wild woods o'er while
a-lumbering we go!"

That was what he was here for. Things were going right. It would be pitiful to fail merely on account of this idiotic lassitude, this unmanly weakness, this boyish impatience and desire for play. He a woodsman! He a fellow with these big, strong men!

A single voice, clear and high, struck into a quick measure:

"I am a jolly shanty boy,
As you will soon discover;
To all the dodges I am fly,
A hustling pine wood rover,
A peavey-hook it is my pride,
An ax I well can handle.
To fell a tree or punch a bull
Get rattling Danny Randall."

And then with a rattle and crash the whole Fighting Forty shrieked out the chorus:

"Bung yer eye! bung yer eye!"

Active, alert, prepared for any emergency that might arise; hearty, ready for everything, from punching bulls to felling trees—that was something like! Thorpe despised himself. The song went on:

"I love a girl in Saginaw,
She lives with her mother.
I defy all Michigan
To find such another.
She's tall and slim, her hair is red,
Her face is plump and pretty,
She's my daisy Sunday best-day girl,
And her front name stands for Kitty."

And again as before the Fighting Forty howled truculently:

"Bung yer eye! bung yer eye!"

The words were vulgar, the air a mere minor chant. Yet Thorpe's mind was stilled. His aroused subconsciousness had been engaged in reconstructing these men entire as their songs voiced rudely the inner characteristics of their beings. Now his spirit halted. Their bravery, pride of caste, resource, bravado, boastfulness—all these he had checked off approvingly. Here now was the idea of the Mate. Somewhere for each of them was a "Kitty," a "daisy Sunday best-girl." At the present or in the past these woods roisterers, this Fighting Forty, had known love. Thorpe arose abruptly and turned at random into the forest. The song pursued him as he went:

"I took her to a dance one night,
A mossback gave the bidding—
Silver Jack bossed the shebang,
And Big Dan played the fiddle.
We danced and drank the livelong night
With fights between the dancing,
Till Silver Jack cleaned out the ranch
And sent the mossbacks prancing."

And with the increasing war and turmoil of the quick water the last shout of the Fighting Forty mingled faintly and was lost:

"Bung yer eye! bung yer eye!"

Thorpe found himself at the edge of the woods facing a little glade into which streamed the radiance of a full moon.

There he stood and looked silently, not understanding, not caring to inquire. Across the way a white-throat was singing, clear, beautiful, like the shadow of a dream. The girl, as if in vision, stood listening.

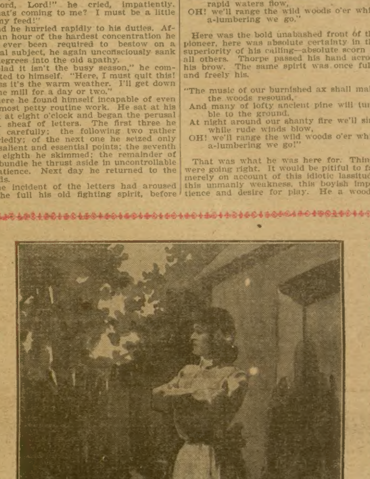
Her small fair head was inclined ever so little sideways and her finger was on her lips as though she wished to still the very hush of night, to which impression the inclination of her supple body lent its grace. The moonlight shone full upon her countenance. A little white face it was, with wide, clear eyes and a sensitive, proud mouth that now half-parted like a child's. Her eyebrows arched from her straight nose in the peculiarly graceful curve that falls just short of pride on the one side and of power on the other, to fill the eyes with a pathos of trust and innocence. The man watching could catch the poise of her long white neck and the molten moon-fire from her tumbled hair—the color of corn-silk, but finer.

Behind her lurked the low, even shadow of the forest where the moon was not, a band of velvet against which the girl and the grass blades were etched like frost against a black window pane. There was something, too, of the frost-work's evanescent spiritual quality in the scene—as though at any moment, with a puff of the balmy summer wind, the radiant glade, the hovering figure, the filagreed silver of the entire setting would melt into the accustomed stern and menacing forest of the northland, with its wolves, and its wild deer, and the voices of its sterner calling.

Thorpe held his breath and waited. Again the white-throat lifted his clear, spiritual note across the brightness, slow, trembling with ecstasy. The girl never moved. She stood in the moonlight like a beautiful emblem of silence, half real, half fancy, part woman, wholly divine, listening to the little bird's message.

For the third time the song shivered across the night; then Thorpe with a soft sob, dropped his face in his hands and looked no more.

This truthful and intensely interesting story of life and love and labor in the great pine woods will be continued next week. Any one subscribing regularly for the Ledger is entitled to receive the cameras and patterns offered free on pages thirteen and fifteen.



The girl stood listening.

Clever Little Stories.

M. E. Ingalls of Cincinnati, president of the Big Four Railroad, is a Maine man, and whenever he goes to his native State he always spends a portion of his time at Harrison, where he began the practice of law. Often in the evening he goes down to the village store and joins the circle of loafers that gather to talk over the public and private events of the nation, state, town and village. One day an old fellow inquired of him: "Is it true that you get a salary of $10,000 a year?" Mr. Ingalls admitted that he did make as much as that in twelve months. "Well," remarked the old fellow, "it's remarkable what cheek and brass will do."

A well-known English surgeon was imparting some clinical instruction to half a dozen students who accompanied him in his rounds the other day. Pausing at the bedside of a doubtful case, he said: "Now, gentlemen, do you think this is or is not a case for operation?" One by one the students made their diagnosis and all of them answered in the negative. "Well, gentlemen, you are all wrong," said the wielder of the free and flashing scalpel, "and I shall operate tomorrow." "No, you won't," said the patient, as he rose in his bed; "six to one is a good majority; gimme my clothes."

Mark Twain tells of a man who when he came home drunk explained to his wife that his condition was due to the fact that he had mixed his drinks. "John," his wife advised, "when you have drunk all the whisky you want, you ought to ask for sarsaparilla." "Yes," retorted her husband, "but when I have drunk all the whisky I want I can't say sarsaparilla."

Liked It on the Table.

The minister of a little Scotch village was at the bedside of a Scotchman named Donald, preparing him by pious exhortations for the great journey.

"Have you anything on your mind, Donald?" he asked. "Is there any question you would like to ask me?" And the minister bent down to listen to the dying man's reply.

"Na, meenister, I'm na afeard. I wad like to ken tho' whether there'll be whisky in Heaven?"

Upon his spiritual counselor remonstrating with him on such a thought at such a moment, he hastened to add, with a knowing look: "Oh, it's no that I mind, meenister; I only thought I'd like to see it on the table."

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UNION LABEL

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Hate is simply love turned wrong side out.

Tears are to women what swear words are to men.

Fortunate is the bride who has a cool head and warm feet.

The rolling stone sees its finish when it strikes the up grade.

It's a lucky coin that doesn't turn tail when you call heads.

It's more blessed to give a knockout blow than it is to receive one.

It is easy to secure the world's good opinion if you have the price.

The average love match soon flickers out unless there is some money to burn.

Many a man's bank balance would be on the wrong side if his creditors had their due.

A chronic liar is less dangerous than the liar who has spasmodic attacks of veracity.

All people with red hair should cultivate baldness and thus lose their tendency to quick temper.

A handsome woman never forgets that she is beautiful, and many of them never let you forget it.

If oil companies could begin at the bottom and drill up the prospectus gusher would lose his job.

A man never knows what he can do until he tries—and if he tries the chances are he will regret it later.

A Texas preacher says that some newspaper men's only chance of getting into Heaven is on a press ticket.

Some wives worry because they imagine the other half of the outfit is in love with every doll-faced girl he happens to look at.

If your boy has long hair do not worry for fear he will become a poet. There is always a chance that he will take up football and not have such a lingering death.

Captain Bogardus, who has been doing some remarkable shooting lately, is not a reincarnation. He is the same Captain Bogardus that was the champion shotgunner of the world ages ago.

A Daughterof Jezebel;

Or, THE BLACKMAILERS OFGOTHAM.

By T. C. Harbaugh.

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE BITE OF JEZEBEL.

Let us return to Chester Blair and see how he fared at the hads of Luke Jarndyce, the madman, and his equally infuriated companion, Hester France.

Choked into insensibility which resembled death, he was borne from the scene of his last adventure to a place where, after a long interval, he recovered consciousness. For a time his brain seemed to swim in the wildest delirium and he could not collect his scattered senses enough to recall with precision the meeting in the little room in Black street.

Gradually, however, he came back to the past. By slow degrees he again got possession of his mind and recalled the terrible encounter with Jarndyce and Hester and amidst darkness that seemed palpable he heard the woman's commands to "Kill! kill! kill!"

He had not been bound, for the twain believed him dead, and at last he rose and circumnavigated the dungeon in the darkness. It was not a large place, nor was it underground. It proved to be a room bare of furniture with one little window from which he could see the lights of the city.

The door was locked and he did not try to force it for he was on the wrong side and could not get the proper purchase. For some time he leaned against the window sill and worked with brain alone.

He did not know whether he was still at 39 Black street or whether the pair had carried him elsewhere. Perhaps they had borne him to another house, for while he was unconscious they might have taken him anywhere.

It was night. Whether it was the same night in which his adventure had taken place he did not know. Perhaps that one had been succeeded by a day and another night had come. But that did not matter much to him.

He was still alive—alive to battle against the plot, and to save Lucille from the consequences of it. The more he studied the plot and the workers the more he despised Holton Clinch. What right had he to sell his foster child to a man like Stanley Gordon in order to keep him right in society? But then he was a moral coward. Chester Blair, who had suspected this for some time, knew it now. And the knowledge did not elevate the banker in his opinion.

When he had come fully to himself he began to devise some means of escape. He opened the window and looked down upon a roof some twenty feet below according to his calculations. It seemed the only way to freedom.

To sound an alarm on the door might only bring to him Hester and her mad companion. It were better to work out his own salvation without their help.

As he had nothing about him to furnish him with a means of descent to the roof he took off his coat and, cutting it up into strips, formed a rope which promised to supply the lack of a cord.

This took some time, for he worked coolly, making everything strong as he proceeded, and at last the life rope was completed.

Then he again took in the scene below, and, fastening one end of the rope to the projecting sill, he clambered from the little opening and lowered himself along the wall.

The lights of he city did not reach him. The wall of the house remained in shadow so that he must have looked like a great lizard trying to make its way down over the bricks. Foot by foot the young man bent on freedom lowered himself toward the roof. After that what? He did not stop to question; he only knew that somewhere above him danger lurked and he had had a startling proof of this for his throat still bore evidence of Jarndyce's mad clutch.

At last, after a breathless descent, his feet touched the sloping roof; he heaved a breath of relief and rested for a spell. Beneath him there was still another roof, but this did not trouble him, for he could reach it without a rope and after a few minutes' rest he resumed his adventure.

When he touched terra firma he found himself in a little alley almost dark. But it was paradise to Chester Blair. Out of the trap at last! Now, let the enemy look out. He was possessed of a startling secret. Whatever Hester had told Holton Clinch, whatever Stanley Gordon had played for a winning hand, he (Blair) knew that Luke Jarndyce was alive.

He had become convinced that somehow or other this man's appearance in the city had driven Holton Clinch into the net of the blackmailers, that Hester already had extorted money from him to keep the secret, and that Stanley Gordon was using the same secret to win the woman he loved.

With such thoughts as these Chester moved down the narrow alley toward the lighted street. In time his escape would be discovered. He must needs work rapidly. Reaching the street, he darted away to turn up in a few moments in his own rooms, where he donned other garments.

"Now, for battle," he said to himself. "This infamous plot must be unearthed without delay. Ere this Gordon has received his answer on Murray Hill and Lucille doubtless is his affianced. I have promised to save her from the humiliation of such a marriage. I have sworn that she shall not have her life blighted by such an infamous bargain and as for Holton Clinch, I wouldn't turn on my heel to save him from his fate."

The night by this time was far spent. He passed the mansion on Murray Hill, but the lights were out and he wondered if the fair girl was awake thinking of the occurrences of the night and waiting for him to circumvent the daughter of Jezebel and her co-plotter.

Chester went back down town.

The night waned at last and the first flush of dawn came up the Bay on the earliest breezes.

The great city began to waken; business began to assume its daily turmoil, and in a short time Chester Blair stood in the midst of the throbbings of trade.

But trade did not concern him just then. Why not wait till Holton Clinch came round to his office and then tell him that Luke Jarndyce was living?

Suddenly the young man saw dart into an alley near the mouth of which he stood an old woman who stared at him a moment a few feet from the pavement.

He had never seen her before, but she looked at him as if she had recognized him. A beggar perhaps out this early for her morning meal from the garbage barrels, but the longer he looked at her the more he became convinced that her mission on the streets was not to beg.

At last the old woman beckoned to Chester and he went forward.

She was now leaning against a wall gasping and holding one hand tightly against her bosom. Her face was very white and ghastly, and the hand shook above her throbbing heart.

"It's hard to die thus!" she said, in gasps, as the young man came up. "It's hard to have not only a thankless child, but to have a murderess for a daughter."

"What's that?" cried Chester.

"I tried to raise her right according to my means and intelligence," went on the one against the stones. "But you know the demon picks them out for his own early in life, and—don't! I'll be all right in a moment."

The figure swayed a little to one side and Chester would have steadied it, but for the woman's last words.

"I don't know you from Adam," she went on. "You look like an honest man, though. I've got it here next my heart——"

"You have what?" broke in Chester.

"The paper I found in her rooms—the paper she wants so badly. When I told her I had it she threw me to the floor awhile ago and struck me with the little dagger——"

"Heavens!"

"I—I never raised her that way!" gasped the white-faced creature. "I never brought Hester France up to kill her own mother!"

Chester uttered a startling cry.

"But I've got it next my heart, the paper she wants so badly," chuckled the woman. "It's for you, for you look honest and may baffle her, and—and——"

The next moment the old woman lay on the stones at Chester's feet, her troubles ended forever.

CHAPTER XIV.

BLED AGAIN BY BEAUTY.

Holton Clinch, banker, came down to his office earlier that morning that usual. There was something breezy about him: he smiled as he bowed to his clerks as if in unusual good humor, and rubbed his hands gleefully when he entered his private office and dropped into the chair.

He recalled the meeting at his house the night before. He felt that he had escaped the schemes of the blackmailer, for Lucille had promised to become Mrs. Gordon and Stanley had pledged him that Hester France, the daughter of Jezebel, would trouble him no more. He could afford to be in good humor.

The millionaire had not tried to trace his runaway wife. If she cared to remain away he would not object, for she had never approved of some of his schemes for adding to his wealth, and if she should be found dead somewhere the secret would still remain a secret and "insanity" would be the verdict. That would clear his skirts and the world would be none the wiser.

Yes; Holton Clinch felt good that particular morning. He ran through the letters on his desk and half abstractedly picked up one, the address on which was a miserable scrawl such as is often made by the cramped fingers of age. The banker often got begging letters. They came in nearly every mail and suggested how he could spend much of his wealth, beggaring himself while he enriched for the time being the criminal and undeserving classes.

He opened this letter and unfolded a dirty bit of paper which seemed to stain his hands.

The first words were jumbled together, the next but little better, and with a hasty oath Holton Clinch threw the whole into the office waste basket.

If he had glanced at the signature he would have read the name of Helen France and have prepared himself for the interview almost at hand.

As he finished glancing through his correspondence quick footsteps were heard beyond the door, which opened a moment later, and Hester stood before him.

The nabob fell back in his chair and shot the ackmailer a baleful glance.

Hester shut the door carefully behind her, then bowed to the magnate and quietly took a chair uninvited. They were face to face, the tigress and her victim.

The daughter of Jezebel was becomingly attired, and a high, close-fitting collar hid her throat. Perhaps had that fair throat been laid bare it might have showed the banker some ugly scratches, the marks of a madman's fingers, for as the reader doubtless has guessed, she had felt the grip of her own victim—Luke Jarndyce.

"I trust you are now ready to complete the little transaction interrupted by your daughter," said Hester, looking straight into the banker's eyes. "She has a temper which somebody ought to curb, and it probably is an inheritance."

Clinch smiled at the recollection of the meeting on Murray Hill and Hester continued:

"You remember that I wanted ten thousand then. I have raised the amount a little, for my needs have grown greater. I trust we shall not be interrupted by Miss Lucille this morning."

Hester glanced toward the door as she finished and hearing no step turned again to Clinch.

"I want twenty thousand dollars," she said, mildly, as if asking for the smallest favor imaginable.

Holton Clinch bit his lip half through. A spasm of rage came over him, but he beat it down.

"Is it worth that?" he asked. "Is this secret you profess to possess worth that amount of money."

"You are the judge," was the reply. "I know, and you don't want the world to know. Isn't that true, Holton Clinch?"

He need not answer for every word was true.

Resting in the drawer was the revolver which he had taken to 39 Black street on a certain night. And facing him sat a woman who was not only in his power, but who deserved to die for her plots and many crimes.

Hester caught the glance he shot toward the private drawer.

"I have left the secret where it will be found should I not return safe from this visit," she said with a smile. "You see, I don't take any chances."

What a cool creature she was.

"You are in league with another person," said the banker, eyeing her.

"I work alone when I work."

"I must refer you to your friend, Mr. Stanley Gordon. We have made certain arrangements, and——"

"Then you will not?"

Hester had risen to her feet and was looking down into the upturned face. She had abated none of her coolness.

"I want twenty thousand dollars this morning," she went on. "What is that sum to you, a multi-millionaire, Holton Clinch? Isn't your financial and social reputation worth ten times the amount? Are you willing to have myself interviewed by a reporter for one of the afternoon papers? I make no boasts, sir, but you know that I can crush your ambitions like a house of cards."

"Woman, this will not be the last demand if I yield now," he said. "You will come again and again. The blackmailer is a human leech that never has enough."

"That's intended for a compliment, I suppose," smiled Hester.

"It is the truth."

"Very well. You refuse? I shall go and see the newspapers. I can sell the story for something, and you can face the exposure as you se fit."

She turned nonchalantly toward the door and put out her hand toward the knob when the voice of the millionaire called her back.

He had opened a drawer in his desk and was taking out a little book covered in blue.

"No," said Hester, with an imperious wave of her gloved hand. "I don't want a check."

Clinch shut his lips firmly and laid his hand on a silver call bell.

"You have the amount in the safe behind you," she again interrupted. "Come! If you won't, why, I'll go."

"Why not kill her?" muttered the banker, as he turned to the steel safe within reach of his chair. "But, no! Gordon has promised to silence her. That's a part of the bargain between us. I can afford to give her what she demands, for it's the last hush money."

Hester followed him closely as he opened the little safe. She now saw him take a lot of large bills from the treasure house and turn slowly to the desk again.

Her eyes got a feverish glow instantly, but soon cooled again. She was still mistress of the situation.

She watched Holton Clinch closely while he ran over the bills until twenty one thousand dollar notes lay heaped before him.

"This is the last time, woman," said the banker, as he pushed the money toward the daughter of Jezebel.

Hester did not reply as her hand closed upon the money and quickly transferred it to her pocket.

"You heard me, didn't you?" he grated.

"I've heard men talk before," she answered. "Good morning, Mr. Clinch."

"I'll let you out, Miss," he exclaimed, springing from his chair and stepping to the door. In another moment he had Hester at his mercy, for he stood between her and the door and in one hand he held the rovelver.

"Use that and you fall forever," coolly said the woman, glancing at the weapon and the banker staggered back and from his chair saw the twenty thousand vanish.

CHAPTER XV.

THE OTHER WOLF'S SNARL.

Hester France with the twenty thousand in her possession felt that she had scored the triumph of her life. To her Holton Clinch was easy plucking and she looked forward to a time when she would again ply her nefarious trade at his door and rob him again. She was not very anxious to meet Stanley Gordon, for she feared that, as he had gained his point, he might have made common cause against her with the millionaire. If that should prove to be the case she might not find the road to wealth one of easy travel.

Then another fear seized her. She had felt the hands of Luke Jarndyce at her throat, and she feared that she could not keep the madman in thrall much longer while she worked her will on Wall Street.

If Jarndyce were out of the way she would have easy sailing, for then the man could not come between her and her desires and when she thought of this she resolved to hunt the Southerner up and see that he did not balk her. More than this, she had lost the important paper which Clinch had overlooked the night he searched the madman's clothes. She had been robbed in turn and she knew now that that paper had fallen into her mother's possession. Indeed, the old woman had taunted her with her triumph and in her rage Hester had driven a dagger into her parent's body to see her flee from the house and to lose her in the night.

She did not know that this paper had fallen into Chester Blair's hands, and, in fact, she did not know as yet that the young man had escaped from the house in Black street.

Had she known these things she might have paused in her steps and vanished from the scene.

Therefore, when she hastened back to Black street with the money, hugging it to her heart and gloating over her success, she planned another raid on Holton Clinch's treasure box. Gordon would soon hold Lucille in his power and that would give him the desired grip on the Clinch millions; but she feared that even then she would get to clutch no more of them.

As she opened the door she heard a movement in the room and the next moment she stood face to face with Stanley Gordon.

The two looked into each other's eyes for a moment, speaking not, but all at once the young man, guessing where Hester had been, exclaimed:

"At your old tricks again, I suppose. You must not do this. I have it all right now."

Hester drew back and from the table watched him with the mien of a resentful wild beast.

"Yes," she blurted. "You have gained your ends and now you would balk me. What will I be when you have your fingers on the old man's millions? I kow you, Stanley Gordon. I made success sure for you. I started the quarry and you have captured it. That's all."

"Yes; I have won the girl."

"Through me!" cried Hester, not moving a step. "You have gained your point. But I'll warrant that she hates you."

Gordon smiled cynically.

"She told me plainly that it was simply a matter of business, that there was no love in the affair at all."

"How could there be?"

"She did it simply to save Holton Clinch. She loves that old coward."

"Better than she should. She must be very pretty when she is worked up."

"I should say so. Why, the raking she gave me when she told me that she would become my wife was worth going miles to hear. I never heard anything like it."

"She sacrificed herself for his sake, then?"

"For his sake alone."

"Gave up her love for Chester Blair?"

"I never inquired about that," and Gordon smiled again. "Once my wife I don't care what she thinks of me. But do you know what I saw in this room in the light of a match?"

Hester shook her head.

"I came up here to find you and found the place deserted. Presently I heard feet in the hall, then the door opened and some one came in. In a moment I heard a voice that startled me and this was followed by the flash of a match.

"Well?"

"The sight that met my eyes almost drove the very breath from my body. Yonder, almost where you are standing now, stood the most terrible man I ever looked upon. It was more a specter than flesh and blood, tall, gaunt, wild-eyed, as if the grave had yielded up its shrouded dead. The face was seamed with gashes from which blood flowed in little streams running down the garments that were mere rags. I looked but once, uttered a cry and fled. I seemed to hear the devil at my heels. How I reached the street safely is still a mystery to me. Had I remained here another moment I should have had the demon at my throat. I shall carry that confrontation with me to my dying day."

"But tell me the truth. Whom did you see?"

"That man! I saw Luke Jarndyce—the man you were to keep in the background till we had worked our plot, the man whom Holton Clinch believes has been taken from the morgue to a grave in the potters' field."

"Here, you say?"

"Where you stand at this moment."

"He is then at large?" said Hester.

"He must be, but he must not be so for long."

"Look here," and Hester advanced a step and suddenly pulled down her collar from her throat.

The marks of Luke Jarndyce's work were plainly to be seen and Gordon, looking for a moment, fell back with a wild cry.

"He did that. He turned on me after we had settled Chester Blair and, sinking his fingers in my throat, held me against yon wall till consciousness fled."

"He is dangerous."

"Too dangerous to live! While he is at large we stand on the edge of a volcano."

Stanley Gordon knew this. He was silent while Hester covered up her throat, and when she had finished he tried to laugh it off, but the attempt was a failure.

"We will find and silence this stumbling block," said Stanley at last. "Nothing shall stand between me and my fortune. But tell me. What did tonight's trip net you?"

A malicious grin suddenly overspread Hester's face. Drawing forth the roll of bills she turned the notes over in her hands while Gordon looked on amazed.

"Keep it all," said he, "it is your share. That fixes you for life. You can now step out of the game. The rest belongs to me."

"To you?"

"Why not? You've feathered your nest. I have promised Holton Clinch that you will not ply your little tricks after this."

Hester flushed, then grew white in the face while her eyes snapped resentment.

"It takes both of us to make a bargain," she cried. "I am not fixed for life, while Holton Clinch revels in wealth and the secret is mine."

"But don't you see that if you keep on you will spoil my plans?" he exclaimed.

She seemed to increase an inch in stature as she came round the table tigress-like and halted within a few feet of where he stood.

"I repudiate the bargain!" she cried. "You play your game and I'll play mine. Holton Clinch's money, or as much of it as I want, belongs to me. Stand off! We have plotted together, but if you try to keep your bargain with him I'll turn on you to the death! death!"

He returned her look with a vengeance.

"You threaten me, do you?" he roared. "Interfere with my plans—bleed Holton Clinch again, and"—he had to catch his breath for very madness—"and I'll tell the police about the dead woman I stumbled over last night in an alley!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE END OF THE SKEIN.

It was the second night after the interview between Stanley Gordon and Hester that Holton Clinch came home rather late for him and entered the library.

He started back the moment he entered the room, for it was already occupied. In a chair, sitting there with the utmost nonchalance, was the evil genius of his life—Hester France.

The daughter of Jezebel never looked so fair before. She wore a new tailor-made gown, her face was rouged until she looked ten years younger, and the high collar still hid the marks of Luke Jarndyce's mad hands.

She greeted the banker with a smile and watched him as he shut the door and came toward her with a white face. He did not ask who had let Hester in. She was there—in his house—and that was enough.

"I've been waiting a good spell," said the woman, as her eyes glowed. "But I'll pardon you, Mr. Clinch. I suppose business of importance kept you down town."

The millionaire stepped to the vacant chair at the desk and looked at Hester.

"Have you seen Mr. Gordon since we met last?" he asked.

"I've seen him."

"And he told you——"

"I've nothing to do with him," she answered, coldly.

"But you are not to come here any more," said Clinch.

"Indeed!" smiled the woman. "I come and go when and where I please and you are the last man to say me nay. You know that, Holton Clinch."

The banker looked round the room like a man caught in a trap and would find a way out. He felt that again he was at the mercy of this fair fiend and with no one near to help him. He did not know whether Lucille was at home.

"I don't want much," said Hester, continuing. "I only want a trifle tonight."

He did not want to hear how much. Perhaps the best way to get rid of the woman would be to pay her without question.

"I want five thousand dollars, that's a trifle with you," she went on.

"You're a human leech," cried the banker, flushing.

"Oh," said Hester, with a haughty toss of the head, "I don't care what you call me. But I reckon my life has had about as few lapses from honesty as yours."

There was no reply.

"I can't remain long tonight. The sooner you pay me the sooner you get rid of my company."

That was true. Holton Clinch raised the lid of his desk and saw in the receptacle a silver-mounted revolver. A dark thought took possession of his mind. Why not? They were alone.

Just then voices were heard in the outer hall accompanied by footsteps and Hester, paling a little, turned in that direction.

"Who's out there?" she asked.

"I don't know. Some of your friends, perhaps."

"Look here. You needn't try to trap me!" she exclaimed. "You have brought the police home with you. I see! But it will do you no good, Holton Clinch, for I left the whole story where it can easily be found should I be arrested. I——"

She looked again toward the door which opened at that moment and the next Hester was on her feet.

Chester Blair and Lucille stood before her.

The fair blackmailer seemed to take in the whole situation at a glance. Her victim was alive. Chester Blair had come back from the dead as it were and now stood before her with undisguised triumph in his eyes.

"This is luck!" exclaimed the young man as his gaze fell on Hester. "I fancy that you have played your last card, witch! By the way, Mr. Clinch," here Chester turned upon the banker who had not spoken, "I have in my pocket a paper which you might like to examine."

Hester's eyes stared at the speaker, nor for a moment did she transfer her gaze to Lucille, who was regarding her with a smile which boded her plans no good.

The following moment Chester drew from his pocket a legal-looking paper, at sight of which the eyes of Hester France flashed as they had never flashed before in that room.

"That belongs to me!" she cried. "You have robbed me of that paper!"

"I did not. I found it in the bosom of an old woman who was stabbed by her own child, and who ran to where I was, and, after telling me of this paper, dropped dead at my feet."

His words were hard and cold as he unfolded the document, which he handed to Holton Clinch. The banker without another look at Hester took the document and glanced at the first lines.

He uttered a startling cry and then, with the paper clutched in his hands, dropped back in the chair like one stricken with paralysis.

Hester made a quick move toward the banker, but the figure of Chester Blair came between and she found her wrist in his grip while she was held at arms' length, the fierce gaze of the young man and Lucille's lover transfixing her like a lance.

"You know what that paper is," he said, sternly. "It tells the truth. You know that it is the decree of divorce which Luke Jarndyce obtained in New Orleans, and which liberated him from his wife Ethel, now Mrs. Holton Clinch, if your infernal machinations have not driven her to her death. You and your co-partner in crime have no hold whatever on Holton Clinch. That paper was given me by your mother with her last breath—the mother you murdered with the dagger. I am in possession of gallows facts, Miss. Do you deny?"

He looked Hester straight in the eye and that fair demon returned the glare with interest.

Meantime, Holton Clinch was reading the document with bated breath. He knew that it released him forever from the power of the blackmailer. He knew that the clinched hand of fate would now open and set him free, that Chester Blair had saved him both from humiliation and the power of the plotters. But Lucille? He had promised her to Stanley Gordon; he had heard her promise to wed that infamous shark in order to spare his own reputation in the money marts of the city. He did not think of his own cowardice; he did not recall his own infamy in the matter; how he had been willing to sacrifice Lucille's future happiness for his own selfish ends.

Suddenly Hester uttered a cry and jerked from Chester's grasp.

She saw that the game was up. She realized that Luke Jarndyce would next be found and made to recognize the document which removed all stain from Mrs. Clinch's second marriage. With the decree out of her hands and in the banker's, the whole plot for thousands and a wife would fall to the ground crushed. Not only this, but she would be arrested for the murder of her own mother.

No wonder she uttered a cry and broke away, springing across the room toward the door. But she found Lucille in her path. The banker's ward blocked her way with defiance in her eyes and her regal figure drawn to its full height under the electric globe.

For a moment the two women stood face to face, then the hand of Hester leaped from her pocket and flew to her lips.

Chester saw the movement and sprang forward; his hands were thrown out toward her, but suddenly, with a half-suppressed cry, the fair fiend tottered back and in another second had dropped in a heap on the carpet.

Lucille uttered a cry. Holton Clinch started from his chair and Chester bent over the fallen form.

"It is all over," said the young man, looking up. "The parricide and blackmailer is beyond the grip of the law."

The next day as a certain man was attempting to board a train in the Grand Central depot a policeman laid his and on his shoulder and said coldly:

"We want you, Mr. Stanley Gordon!"

There was no reply, and in a short time the man thus named sat in a little cell in the station house with a very black charge on the slate against him.

The game had ended a little sooner than the plotters hoped and entirely contrary to their designs. Holton Clinch faced Chester Blair and heard from his lips words which made him bow his head in shame.

The young man, indignant, spared him not. And at the end of the interview, the white-faced banker fell back into the depths of his chair and closed his eyes.

"I shall take Lucille from this house," said Chester, as he turned to go. "You would have sold her soul to a fiend to preserve your social standing; you cared not for the sufferings of your wife for whom you did not even hunt. We will find her. Lucille shall find her mother, and as for you—coward, ingrate, never cross the threshold of my house where Lucille shall reign queen of heart and home!"

Holton Clinch obeyed Chester's command to the letter. The banker's wife was found far from New York in a state bordering on insanity, but Lucille took her to her own home and nursed her back to health, while sudden death soon called Holton Clinch from the money marts of the western world.

As for Stanley Gordon, he was punished for his part in the infamous conspiracy, and Luke Jarndyce recovered his reason and vanished.

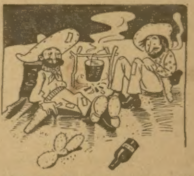
There was no happier man in the great metropolis than Chester Blair, happy in the love of the woman he had won; while under the sod, her schemes frustrated, and her name blotted forever from the book of human memory, slept the daughter of Jezebel.

(The end.)

A Gallant Rescue.

Not long ago, during a gale on the Banks, Henry George, of the crew of the Newfoundland schooner Pioneer was swept overboard by a wave, says Leslie's Monthly. A comrade, Joseph Mooney, grabbed a bait plank as a support and sprang after him. Cumbered as he was with his oil-clothes and sea boots, Mooney first worked off his footgear and then his coat, and swam for his chum. George was floating unconscious on the surface of the water, having been thrown against the bulwark and hurt as he was flung over the side. After a long struggle Mooney reached him and gripped him by the collar with one hand while with the other he held the frail plank in position between them. In this perilous plight the two men remained for three hours, until the schooner was able to beat back to them. The sea was running mountain high and it was feared a dory would not live in it. To lessen the risk for the skiff and the men in the water, the schooner had to be run down almost sheer upon the latter, and then a dory with two men in it was launched bodily by a mighty heave of the rest of the crew, and in the "lull" created under the sheltered lea of the craft, the rescue was soon accomplished. Mooney was at the last gasp. He had not only suffered the buffeting of the waves and the chill of the cold, but beside the effort of keeping his comrade on the plank he found that the board could not support both their weights, and consequently he had to swim himself most of the time. He fainted when he was dragged into the boat, but his grip was so tight on his companion's collar that his fingers had to be pried open with a marlinspike.

Despicable Character.



Cactus Cal—What makes you despise that long-legged fellow with the Dubbs' outfit? I hear you an' him can't git on nohow.

Bad Bob—Despise him? Why, say, the chump can't shoot for sour apples. He's missed me four times.

DEAFNESS CURED

Louisville Man Originates a Simple Little Device that Instantly Restores the Hearing—Fits Perfectly, Comfortably, and Does Not Show.

190-PAGE BOOK FREE TELLS ALL ABOUT IT

Since the discovery of a Louisville man it is no longer necessary for any deaf person to carry a trumpet, a tube, or any such old-fashioned device, for it is now possible for any one to hear perfectly by a simple invention that fits in the ear and can not be detected. The honor belongs to Mr. George H. Wilson, of Louisville, who was himself deaf, and now hears as well as any one. He calls it Wilson's Common Sense Ear Drum, is built on the strictest scientific principles, containing no metal of any kind, and is entirely new in every respect. It is so small that no one can see it, but, nevertheless, it collects all sound waves and diverts them against the drum head, causing you to hear perfectly. It will do this even when the natural ear drums are partially or entirely destroyed, perforated, scarred, relaxed, or thickened. It fits any ear from childhood to old age, and, aside from the fact that it does not show, it never causes the hearer irritation, and can be used with comfort day or night.

It will cure deafness in any person no matter how acquired, whether from catarrh, scarlet fever, typhoid or brain fever, measles, whooping cough, gathering in the ear, shocks from artillery, or through accidents. It not only cures but stays the progress of deafness and all roaring and buzzing noises. It does this in a simple, sure, and scientific way. The effect is immediate.

Let every person who needs this at once send to the company for its 190-page book, which you can have free. It describes and illustrates Wilson's Common Sense Ear Drums and contains many bonafide letters from numerous users in the United States, Canada, Mexico, England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Australia, New Zealand, Tasmania, India. These letters are from people in every station in life—clergymen, physicians, lawyers, merchants, society ladies, etc.—and tell the truth about the benefits to be derived from the use of this wonderful little device; you will find among them the names of people in your own town or state, and you are at liberty to write to any of them you wish and secure their opinion as to the merits of the only scientific ear drums for restoring the hearing to its normal condition.

Write today and it will not be long before you are again hearing. Address for the free book and convincing evidence, Wilson Ear Drum Co., 1051 Todd building, Louisville, Ky., U. S. A.

TWO TIPS.

And Both Winners.

A man gets a friendly tip now and then that's worth while.

A Nashville man says: "For many years I was a perfect slave to coffee, drinking it every day and all the time I suffered with stomach trouble and such terrific nervousness that at times I was unable to attend to business and life seemed hardly worth living. I attributed my troubles to other causes than coffee and continued to drench my system with this drug. Finally I got so bad I could not sleep, my limbs were weak and trembling and I had a constant dread of some impending danger and the many medicines I tried failed to help me at all.

"One day a friend told me what Postum had done for her husband and advised me to quit coffee and try it but I would not do so. Finally another friend met me on the street one day and after talking about my health he said, 'You try Postum Cereal Coffee and leave coffee alone,' adding that his nervous troubles had all disappeared when he gave up coffee and began to drink Postum.

"This made such a great impression on me that I resolved to try it although I confess I had little hopes. However, I started in and to my unbounded surprise, in less than two weeks I was like another person. All of my old troubles are now gone and I am a strong, healthy, living example of the wonderful rebuilding power of Postum. It is a fine drink as well as a delicious beverage and I know it will correct all coffee ills; I know what a splendid effect it had on me to give up coffee and drink Postum." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

There's a Reason.

Look in each package for a copy of the famous little book, "The Road to Wellville."

Well Insured.

Teacher—Why did Nathan Hale regret that he had but one life to give for his country?

Up-to-date Boy—He carried a heavy life insurance, ma'am.

Radisson on the Chippewa.

A new town in Sawyer County, Wis., on the Omaha Road. Located on both the Chippewa and Couderay Rivers in center of a most fertile and promising hardwood district. Good muscallonge, bass and pike fishing in both rivers. Exceptional opportunities for landseekers. If looking for a new location don't fail to see this new country. For map and full particulars write to Postmaster, Radisson, Sawyer Co., Wis., or to T. W. Teasdale, General Passenger Agent, C., St. P., M. & O. Ry., St. Paul.

How About Henry?

Maud—You can't make me believe an opal is an unlucky stone. I was wearing one when I first met Henry?

Irene—It certainly brought good luck—to you. What was Henry wearing?

Distressing Stomach Disease

Quickly cured to stay cured by the masterly power of Drake's Palmetto Wine. Invalids no longer suffer from this dreadful malady, because this remarkable remedy cures absolutely every form of stomach trouble. It is a cure for the whole world of stomach weakness and constipation, as well as a regulator of the kidneys and liver.

Only one dose a day, and a cure begins with the first dose. No matter how long or how much you have suffered you are certain of cure with one small dose a day of Drake's Palmetto Wine, and to convince you of this fact the Drake Formula Company, 96 Lake Street, Chicago, Ill., will send a trial bottle of Drake's Palmetto Wine free and prepaid to every reader of the Chicago Ledger who desires to make a thorough test of this splendid tonic Palmetto remedy. A postal card or letter will be your only expense.

Imitation Article.

The hairdresser had done rather a hasty job on the raven locks of the young woman.

"Well," she said, surveying the result in the mirror, "this is a shampoo, all right, if there is any such thing as real 'poo.'"

All German breweries keep beer standing for at least three months after it is made, before delivering it to customers.

A Trifle in the Way.

A Salvation Army recruit was especially moved one day while traveling to address a somewhat austere individual seated just in front of him. Touching him on the shoulder, he put the usual question: "My brother, are you a Christian?"

"Sir!" was the reply—and perhaps with a shade of impatience—"I'm a professor in a theological seminary."

But this only seemed to call for renewed effort, and the young man was equal to it. "My dear brother," he said, "as you value your soul, don't let a thing like that stand between you and the kingdom."

Another Long Felt Want.

Friend—Working at something new?

Inventor—Yes, sir; greatest thing yet. It's a new patent safety life-preserver, for ferryboats, steamers, etc.

Friend—What's its advantages over the old kind?

Inventor—The advantage? Why, sir, you may not believe it, but it's so light that if thrown to a person in the water it can hit him without killing him.

A Pressing Invitation.

Mrs. De Style—My dear Miss Van Note, I am so glad I met you. Didn't know you were back. You must come to my converzatione tomorrow.

Miss Van Note—Really, Mrs. De Style, I am afraid I should not be much of an acquisition.

Mrs. De Style—Oh, you do yourself injustice. We don't want you to talk; we want you to play the piano.

Preparing for the Ordeal.

It was in a restaurant and the young wife looked anxiously at her husband as he devoured a double portion of lobster salad.

"I wish you wouldn't eat that, dear," she urged. "You know it never agrees with you, especially at night."

"It doesn't, but I don't care," he said, as he tackled a huge mouthful. "It's my turn to take care of the baby tonight, anyhow."

The Lord's Job Was Ended.

The late Rev. George Koenig, a Brooklyn clergyman, who was rather puritanical in his views, rebuked one of his parishioners whom he saw with her hair profusely curled. "If the Lord intended your hair to curl," he said, "he would have curled it for you." Whereupon, the young lady replied, saucily: "He did when I was a baby, but now I am quite able to curl it myself."

Manifestly Impossible.

Mr. Con Seet—I suppose I'm what you might call a gay Lothario, Miss Peppery.

Miss Peppery—Indeed?

Mr. Con Seet—Yes; I'm attentive to a number of girls, but I'm not engaged to any particular one.

Miss Peppery—Naturally, for how could she be engaged to you if you were?

Her Charms Undimmed.

Friend—And you don't know where your husband spends his evenings?

Mrs. Beauti—I have not the remotest idea.

"Don't you feel worried?"

"Not a particle."

"On what do you base your confidence?"

"On the fact that whenever I entered a crowded car a dozen men jump up and offer me a seat."

The World Getting Old.

Young Man (enthusiastically)—This is an age of progress.

Old Man (pityingly)—Progress! Nonsense! The world is going backward, sir. Why, sir, in my young days even the monthly magazines came out six weeks ahead of time—yes, sir.

Because of It.

"Why do they call this a free country?" asked the unwashed anarchist.

"Because," answered the respectable citizen, "you are at liberty to leave it if you don't like it."

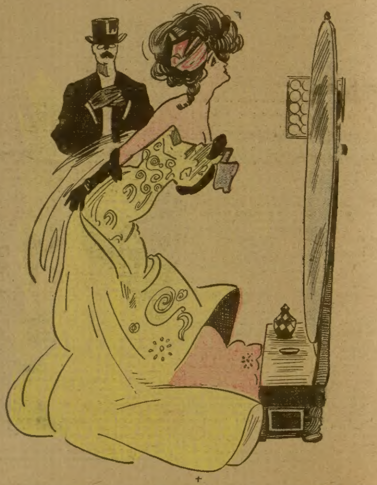
Misses a Great Item.

"If a young man wishes any consolation when he's preparing for his wedding," said the supper table sage, "just let him remember that he doesn't have to buy the trousseau."

And Minstrel Shows.

Ostend—What becomes of all the old jokes when people get tired of telling them?

Pa—Most of them go in the theater programs, my boy.



Mr. Upperten—Do you know, my dear, I think your new evening gown is ridiculously low?

Mrs. Upperten—I'm so glad, dearie; I was afraid when you saw the bill you would think it was extraordinarily high.

Worked Like a Charm.

Mrs. De Style—That complexion wash you gave me has worked like a charm, and my skin is as soft as a rose leaf.

Physician—Did you follow my directions, and use that and nothing else?

"Not another thing, not even powder. But I am going away, and you must tell me how to make it."

"Certainly."

"What are the ingredients?"

"Soap and water."

Dazed, But Not Conquered.

Eastern Man—Talking about hail storms, the East is still ahead. Why, sir, only a month ago hailstones fell here as big as eggs.

Western Man (off his guard)—Eh? What's that? Big as eggs?

Eastern Man (calmly)—Yes, sir; big as hen eggs, sir.

Western Man (recovering himself)—Oh! Only hen eggs? I thought you meant ostrich eggs!

How She Knew.

Two little girls were playing in front of a city dwelling when a strange man went by.

"That man is an undertaker," said one of the little girls.

"How do you know?" asked her companion.

"Oh, because he is the man who undertook my grandmother."

Gentle Hint to Papa.

"Well, Ethel, what was the text?"

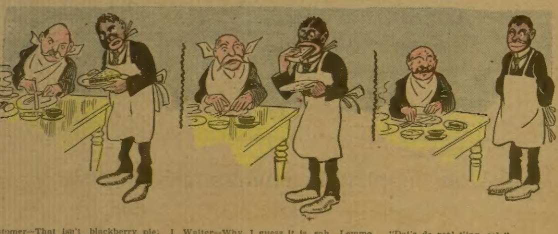
"'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' You know that, papa, don't you?"

The Secret Gut.

Jack—How do you manage to keep your clothes looking so nice?

George—I buy new ones occasionally.

PROVING IT.



Customer—That isn't blackberry pie; I can tell by the looks of it.

Waiter—Why, I guess it is, sah. Lemme see. Yes—

"Dat's de real t'ing, sah."

$1.00 BIG 500-POUND STEEL RANGE OFFER

If you can use the best big 500-pound steel range made in the world, and are willing to have it placed in your own home on three months' free trial, just cut this notice out and send to SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO., Chicago, and you will receive free by return mail a big picture of the steel range and many other cooking and heating stoves, you will also receive the most wonderful $1.00 steel range offer, an offer that places the best steel range or heating stove in the home of any family, such an offer that no family in the land, no matter what their circumstances may be, or how small their income, need be without the best cooking or heating stove made.

Resembled Papa's Greeting.

A couple of Wellington, Kansas, young people were seated together on the settee under the maple. They were too absorbed to notice the gathering clouds. Suddenly a bolt struck the tree and flung the young people apart with a jar such as they are not likely to forget soon again. The girl was the first to recover. "Run, George, run!" she cried. "Oh, I knew you would stay till papa caught you."

Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup for Children teething, softens the gums, reduces inflammation, allays pain, cures wind colic, 25 cents a bottle.

Good Evidence.

Benham—I know a woman wrote this story.

Mrs. Benham—How do you know it?

Benham—The author makes a man have the last word.

Lucky Escape.

Hat Clerk—That new boarder is awfully dissipated. He never arises until it is almost noon.

Shoe Clerk—Lucky dog! He never goes against breakfast foods.

Why They Settle.

Wife—Who can doubt the power of woman's love! Think of the thousands of wild youths who have settled down into staid and respectable citizens as soon as they married.

News From Home.

First Tourist (from South America)—I just got a letter from home. They have had two wars and a revolution since we left.

Second Tourist—Anybody hurt?

More Fun Ahead.

First Crank—Come around to the hall tonight. We are getting up a new league.

Second Crank—What sort?

First Crank—We haven't decided yet; but it's going to be an anti-something or other.

The Unknowable.

Binks—Winkers is a great friend of yours, isn't he?

Jinks (a man of the world)—Can't say. I haven't had to borrow money since I knew him.

Had Kept His Promise.

She—You promised to stop smoking when we were married.

He—Well, they won't allow you to smoke in church.

His Hope of Winning.

After the old gentleman had invited the young man to be seated the latter coughed once or twice to clear his throat and then bluntly suggested that he wished to marry the old gentleman's daughter.

The old gentleman didn't wish to be too ready to give his consent, but he admitted after a few minutes he thought he had no objections.

"That's just the trouble," protested the young man disconsolately. "If you'd only oppose it and order me out of the house once or twice and buy a bulldog I'd have some show of getting her."

Better Than Herbs.

Anxious Mother—There is a certain very eligible young man that I want my daughter to fall in love with. Do you deal in love-philters?

Modern Magician—No, madam; but I can bring the match about in another way.

Anxious Mother—Oh, thank you. What shall I do?

Modern Magician—Shut her up in a boarding school for a year, and then arrange your plans so that this youth shall be the first man she meets after she gets out.

Tipping the Waiter.

Cutter—Do you make a habit of tipping the waiter?

Skinner—Of course. I used to give tips in cash, now I give them on the stock market. The waiter looks on me as his best friend and feeds me like an emperor. On the other hand, I know the tips I give him are slowly but surely exhausting his pecuniary resources and that reconciles me to the tip nuisance.

An Alluring Argument.

Wife—Why did you stand and talk so long with that Turkish peddler?

Husband—I was trying to convert him.

Wife—Huh! Great missionary you would be! What did you tell him?

Husband—I told him a Christian was not obliged to have more than one wife.

What the Hog Weighed.

"I heard that you sold your hog."

"Yis, bedad, I did."

"How much did it weigh?"

"Begorra, it didn't weigh as much as I thought it would." (After a moment's reflection): "I thought it wouldn't."

An American Amusement.

Friend—Now that you have made millions what will you do?

Old Bullion—I shall retire, and amuse myself telling people what a burden wealth is, and how happy I was when I was poor.

Not in Any Danger.

"You go into the ocean every day?"

"Yes."

"But aren't you afraid?"

"Not at all. I'm safe. I don't know how to swim."

He Meant Business.

Mother—Do yo' 'spect that young Jackson means business?

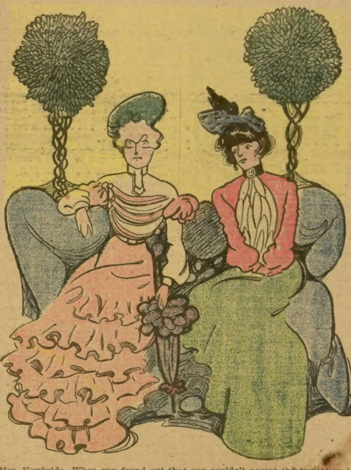
Daughter—Suttinly! He's already painted a washin' an' ironin' sign.

Something After Death.

Mrs. Bingo—Oh, dear! Do you think that death ends all?

Bingo—All but the estate. The lawyers end that.—Judge.

CONSIDERATE



Mrs. Newbride—When you found out that you couldn't accept the invitation to our wedding why didn't you send your regrets?

Miss Rivale—Oh, I thought you'd have enough of your own pretty soon, dear.

The Beautiful Morning.

I.

Birds in the blossoms sing sweet to the skies;
Suns set in shadows, but bright stars arise,
And joy, at the last, is the sweeter for sighs,
  And we drift to a beautiful morning!

II.

Bitter the crosses, and sad all the cares,
But ever a rose in the thorns o' the years,
And the bright smile of Love in a tempest of tears,
  And we drift to a beautiful morning!

III.

Kiss hands to the trouble—take heart in the strife,
Though the sky with the black clouds and thunder is rife;
We shall reap in God's sunlight the lilies of life
  And we drift to a beautiful morning!

Josh Billings' Philosophy.

In case ov doubt, always lead a trump. This iz a good rule, in life az well az in whist.

I never knu a man-worshiper to amount to mutch ov ennything else.

I don't beleaf in good or bad luk; but yet I would not jine an unlucky man in enny kind ov an enterprize.

About the only differens thare iz between bizzyboddys iz, the older they gro the more disgusting they bekum.

Mere tallent iz transhunt, and givs place to other tallent, but genius ov every kind iz immortal.

Truth iz immortal; it haz a birthday, but no old age nor deth.

The tru policy ov all satire iz to skourge vice and pholly, but not the author ov it.

Sun, air, water, advice and abuse are about all the luxurys a man kan git in this world without paying for them.

Sumtimes yu will find it on the top, sumtimes at the bottom, but every cup haz something bitter in it.

An Inventive Genius.

"Is that the man you said had invented a new steel process and grown immensely wealthy?" we ask, pointing to an individual in a large checked suit.

"That's the fellow," answers our friend.

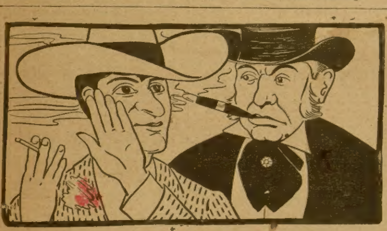
"But he doesn't look like a workman. His hands are white and soft and he doesn't seem like a man who had ever done a day's hard labor."

"Who said anything about working? I said he had invented a new steal process. He got up a get-rich-quick scheme that dodged all the laws."

Not Yet Settled.

Mrs. McCall—So your dear old uncle has gone to Heaven?

Willie—We don't know yet; his will won't be read till after the funeral.



"Hear the story about the fly paper?"
"No."
"Well, you'll be stuck on it."

A Lay of Regret.

The best laid plans o' mice and men
  Gang aft agley.
The best laid eggs of the old hen
  In storage stay.

Don't blame the hen if the egg is bad. It was all right when her responsibility ended.

AGENTS WANTED

WANTED Lady or gentleman of fair education to travel for a firm of $250,000.00 capital. Salary $1,072 per year and expenses; paid weekly. Address, with stamp, giving age and references, J. A. ALEXANDER, Englewood, Ill.

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Had to Give Credit.

Chekib Bey, the Turkish minister to Washington, attended in Philadelphia the launching of the Turkish warship Medjidia at the Cramps' shipyard. During the luncheon that followed the launch Chekib Bey animadverted for a moment on the beggars of Philadelphia.

"You have here," he said, "an enterprising and intelligent collection of beggars. One of them approached me this morning. He told a moving tale of misfortune, then he asked me for a little money.

"I put my hand in my pocket, to find that I was altogether out of change.

"'My man,' I said, 'I have nothing for you now, but in an hour I shall be passing this way again. Then, I promise you, you shall get something from me.'

"'All right, sir,' said the beggar; 'but all the same,' he added, fretfully, 'you wouldn't believe the amount of credit I give in this way.'"

Perhaps She Wanted the Remedy.

He—I offered to kiss her tears away.

She—Well?

He—She cried worse than ever.

AGENTS WANTED

BIG PAYING BUSINESS For MEN, WOMEN. Write for names of hundreds of delighted customers. Make $30 to $50 weekly. Do business at home or traveling, all or spare time, selling Gray outfits and doing genuine gold, silver, nickle and metal plating on Watches, Jewelry, Tableware, Bicycles, all metal goods. Heavy plate. No experience, quickly learned. Enormous demand. No toys or humbug. Outfits all sizes. Everything guaranteed. Let us start you. We teach you FREE. Write today. H. GRAY & CO., CINCINNATI, O.

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LINKS OF LOVE AND GOLD;

Or, The Grey=Osmond Duel.

By Colonel Prentiss Ingraham.

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CHAPTER XVII.

The one whose running feet had put the unwelcome visitor at the Jersey cottage to flight, was the couchman and man-of-all-work.

"Quick, John, get your master's shotgun and go in pursuit of yonder ruffian! See! he has just disappeared in that thicket!"

John moved like lightning, seized the gun, and rushed off in pursuit dashing into the thicket not three minutes behind the fugitive.

But John was a careful man, and once out of sight of the cottage, he calmly sat down on a log, lighted his pipe and kept a bright lookout that he in turn might not become a fugitive.

Half an hour after he returned to the cottage, a dolorous look upon his face, and reported that he had been unable to overtake the fleet-footed villain; if he had, "why, then, somebody would have been hurt," he added.

"I am sorry, John; but hasten to get me the phaeton and I will drive to the depot and meet my husband."

Ten minutes after Bonnie Bess was rolling along the fine road on her way to the neighboring railway station.

The train arrived on time, Gerald Grey sprang out, and the next instant the thoroughbred mare was dashing home at a rapid pace.

In a few words Bonnie Bessie had told all that had happened.

"My brave girl, you deserve praise for all your courage. And you hit him hard, you say?"

"Yes; I think the bullet broke his left arm. There were drops of blood where he crossed the road."

"Then I will take John and go in chase of him; if badly wounded he cannot have gone far, and I would give much to capture him. And he dared to call you my mistress, Bessie?"

"Did he not speak the truth, Gerald?"

"It shall not be so tomorrow night, for I will bring a young clergyman, a friend of mine, out on the train with me, and you shall become my wife, darling."

The heart of Bonnie Bessie throbbed violently, and her joy was too deep for utterance.

She loved Gerald Grey with her whole power of devotion, had yielded up all for him, and was happy in being near him, even though she felt she was a guilty thing.

But she argued bitterly in her own heart:

"What more can a daughter of a felon, of a man who died on the gallows, ask? No; I must be content as I am—I will ask no more than to have him love me."

Arriving at the cottage, Gerald Grey and John at once started in pursuit, the latter feeling quite brave in the presence of his master.

Taking the direction the fugitives had gone, Gerald Grey rode rapidly on until he came to where there were traces of a horse and vehicle having lately been standing.

"The fellow had a confederate. Well, we will follow this wheel track," said Gerald Grey, and they dashed along the country road for several miles until they arrived at a railway station just at dark.

Inquiry gained the information that a man arrived at the station early in the morning, hired a horse and buggy and drove off.

He had been gone several hours and returned just in time to catch the 5 o'clock train for the city.

"And coming out, I met that train at this way station; he is already in the city. Did you notice if the man was wounded?" asked Gerald Grey.

"His arm was hurt; he said he had fallen and broken it," replied the station-keeper.

"That's my man; but I am too late to catch him. Come, John, we will return."

It was a sore disappointment to Bonnie Bessie when Gerald Grey returned without his human game, for she was anxious to have so dangerous a foe out of the way of doing harm.

But then she was so happy at the promise made her for the morrow that she forgot her troubles and dread, and became almost girlish in her cheerfulness.

All the next day, while Gerald Grey was in the city, Bonnie Bessie went about the house, her heart in a flutter of delight.

The choicest flowers were selected and placed in the spare chamber which the clergyman was to occupy; she wished to do all in her power for the man who was to make her the wife of Gerald Grey.

Then Bessie set to work to prepare a most sumptuous dinner, and John and the cook were at their wits' ends, so busy were they kept making preparations for the evening.

At the proper hour, John arrayed in his best, drove off to the station to meet the train, and before sunset Gerald Grey and the clergyman arrived at the cottage.

"Bessie, this is my friend, the Rev. Mr. Sherman," said Gerald Grey, and Bonnie Bessie looked exquisitely lovely in an evening dress as she warmly pressed the clergyman's hand.

He was a young man, scarcely more than twenty-five, with a clean-shaven face and large blue eyes.

A man that had a strangely sinister look, in spite of his ministerial garb, white cravat and sober countenance.

But Bessie was in no mood to find fault with the means of making her the wife of Gerald Grey—the words of the marriage ceremony were what she wanted; the instrument who said them was nothing to her.

At dinner Bessie found the Rev. Mr. Sherman rather a jolly personage for a clergyman. He laughed pleasantly, told jokes, he had seen much of the world, and drank his wine without a wry face, glass for glass, with his host.

After dinner the three went into the parlor, and Gerald Grey took from his pocket a ring and the clergyman went to his room after a prayer-book.

"I have told him, Bessie, that I ran off with you, without your parents' consent—that we were pursued and fired upon, and you were wounded; also that now having recovered I wished to make you my wife. But here he is."

As Gerald ceased speaking the Rev. Dr. Sherman entered the room and in a very business-like manner asked the parties who were to be married to take their places before him.

Then, in calm, even tones, he read the marriage cermony of the Episcopal Church, the ring was placed upon Bessie's finger, the responses promptly and intelligently given, and Bonnie Bessie was pronounced the wife of Gerald Grey.

Her face was flushed with pride and joy; his face was white, his lips colorless, and the smile that spread over his face could hardly have been called there by joy. Her smile was real, for she had just been pronounced the wife of the only being she loved in the world—the whole wide world so full of loving hearts and hearts longing to be loved.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The steamer that carried Calvert Forrester to Panama was a swift one, and the trip was made rapidly and in safety.

Then up the Pacific Coast all went well, and the manager of the firm of Langley & Co. reached San Francisco in good health and spirits.

A week's stay in the city of the Golden Gate and Calvert had completed his mission there, and embarked for China, where he arrived in good time and set to work on the duties that carried him thither.

Congratulating himself on the rapidity of his work, and the prospect of an earlier return home than he had anticipated, Calvert Forrester set sail for Australia, the last place where business called him.

In due time he reached the city of his destination, and at once sought the branch house of the firm of Langley & Co. of New York.

For several days he devoted himself to work, and then completed the object of his mission. The dissolute heir was no longer a member of the firm—he had withdrawn for his own ruin and the firm's good.

Having several days' leisure before the sailing of the vessel in which he was to start upon his return, Calvert Forrester devoted himself to sight-seeing.

One evening, as he returned to his hotel, he found a man waiting to see him—a sailor-like fellow, whose face was a mixture of shrewdness and honesty, it seemed.

Finding that his visitor desired to see him privately, Calvert invited him to his room, and the following conversation ensued:

"Well, sir, be seated, and tell me how I can serve you."

"It is not me, sir, that you would serve, nor yourself, but it is Mr. Gerald Grey, if you are a member of his firm," said the man.

"I am not a member of the firm, but its business manager. Anything concerning Mr. Grey's welfare concerns me, so speak out."

"You know he was once living in Australia?"

"Yes; I believe so. I knew that he was in India and China."

"And here, too, sir; it was here he established the firm that has made him so rich——"

"Indeed! You seem well informed on Mr. Grey's movements. Did you know him, pray?"

"I guess I did, sir; I used to work for him, and my brother, who is now very ill, worked for him, too. But my brother did not do the right thing, you know—was a trifle dishonest, you see, and cleared out with some money and valuable papers belonging to Mr. Grey."

"Indeed!"

"True as Gospel, sir; but you see, my brother is now ill, nigh unto death, the doctors say, and he is anxious to make a clean breast of it, and, learning you was in town, wished to return the papers to you for Mr. Grey."

"Why did he not send them by you?"

"You see, sir, he is my brother, and he was afraid dishonesty might lie in the blood—not that I ever did any wrong deed, sir; but he didn't wish to lead me into temptation, you know."

"How did your brother know that I was here, or had aught to do with Mr. Grey?"

"I saw it in the papers, sir ,and I read it to him, and at once he said: 'Sure, that's my man; I will return those papers to Mr. Grey by Mr. Forrester.'"

"And your brother is very ill, you say?"

"Yes, sir; he has lived a trifle fast in his time and kept late hours—both bad on the constitution, sir. You see, he is going in a few days."

"Going where?"

"Lord save you, sir; where do we all go?"

"He will die, you mean, in a few days?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then give me his address and I will come and see him tomorrow."

"It won't do, sir, for you see life's fearfully uncertain, and he may slip his cable at any moment. You'd better go with me."

"All right; how far is it?"

"About five miles, sir."

"Out in the country? I cannot go until tomorrow, then."

"Please do, sir; he's mighty bad, and most anxious to see you."

Calvert Forrester walked to the window and glanced out. It was very dark and coming on to rain.

A moment he hesitated and then urged by some feeling he could not then understand, he said, firmly:

"I will not go tonight; call here at nine o'clock and I will drive out to see your brother with you."

A look of disappointment swept across the man's face, but he said earnestly:

"Please, sir, don't neglect the call of a dying man. My brother would never forgive me if I returned without you, and the disappointment might bring on a hemorrhage that would kill him at once."

Still Calvert Forrester hesitated. Though not of a suspicious nature, he yet did not wish to go; there was a still small voice in his heart, warning him to remain where he was.

"The papers are of great value, sir, to Mr. Grey; he would give worlds for them," put in the man, slyly.

This decided him; he would go.

"I will accompany you, my man; I will soon be ready."

Ringing the bell, Calvert Forrester ordered a carriage.

"I have a carriage, sir; my brother sent one for you."

"All right," and half an hour after Calvert Forrester and his persistent visitor were driving rapidly out into the country, with darkness and rain and gloom all around them.

"These horses either go very slow or your five miles are very long," said Calvert Forrester to his companion, after they had been nearly two hours on the road.

"Five miles! Why, I said nine miles, sir!"

"I understood you five; but you must have said nine, as we already have gone over five," replied Calvert, resignedly.

Still on they continued their way until the driver turned off into what appeared to be a road through a forest; yet dark as it was, and through the frowning way, the horses pressed on unerringly, until they suddenly came to a halt before the door of an old cabin.

A dim light was visible in the window, and Calvert Forrester and his companion dismounted, the latter giving a rap upon the door, which was immediately opened by a large man, in hat, top boots, and storm-coat.

As Calvert Forrester stepped across the threshold the carriage drove away.

Glancing around him, Calvert Forrester found himself in a place but little removed from a hovel.

A low bed, covered with old blankets, a table, a cupboard, and several rickety chairs constituted the furniture of the room, while a half-open door showed him another apartment no more comfortable-looking.

Dismally the wind howled outside, fretfully the rain pattered on the roof, and all around was discomfort and gloom—the very place to give one the blues, especially when brought there to see a dying man.

"Can I see your brother now? I wish to return as soon as possible," said Calvert, in a hushed voice, impressed by his miserable surroundings.

The man who had let them in had at once gone into the other rooom, and thither Calvert's companion followed him.

A low hum of conversation followed, and then the two men entered together, while behind them came a third person with a most villainous look.

Suddenly and intuitively the idea came upon Forrester that he had been led into a trap, and he dropped his hand hastily into the pocket of his sack coat, and an ominous click followed the movement—he had not come there unarmed.

"Can I see the man you brought me here under pretense of seeing, or——"

"Or what, stranger?" said the one that had been Calvert's companion to the cabin.

"Or is this a plot against me?"

"You speak with wisdom, sir. We want you, and you'd better not make a fuss about it, or we will have to clip your spurs. You are a prisoner to the Bushrangers, sir."

Calvert Forrester knew well what the Bushrangers were—a gang of desperadoes who nightly committed deeds of the foulest kind, and were a terror to the country.

That he had been tricked into their power for some sinister motive, he now well knew. But he was determined not to be taken by them without a struggle for his freedom.

The odds were fearfully against him. Alone, in a lonely cabin, miles away from the town, and in a strange country, while before him stood three desperate scamps whom he knew would stop at no crime to accomplish their ends.

Why he had been brought there he did not attempt to consider; he was there, and that was sufficient, so he whipped out his pistol in an instant and covered his foes.

The act was so sudden it took them by surprise, for relying in their numbers and the position in which he found himself, they did not believe their victim would resist.

As Calvert leveled his pistol he began to back slowly toward the door and his hand was upon the latch, when one of the men suddenly sprang toward him.

It was the one who had decoyed him from the hotel and led him into the danger.

Toward this man particularly Calvert Forrester felt no mercy, and he promptly acted.

There followed a deafening report, a shriek of agony, a heavy fall and Calvert Forrester bounded out into the darkness and rain.

Like a deer he ran on, followed by pursuers, whose cries told him they were a dozen in number, and around him whistled

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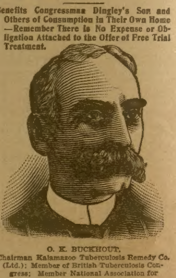

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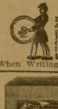

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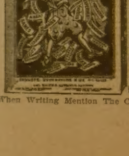

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several bullets, but they were fired at random—the darkness and rain preventing him from being seen.

On, on, he ran at his utmost speed, until he knew that a mile lay between him and the cabin, then he halted for rest, and again walked swiftly on, until after awhile he came out upon a highway.

Here he felt he was safe; he had doubled on his pursuers, and they were nowhere near him.

Taking his bearings as well as he could, Calvert turned to the right down the road, for he felt it would lead him back toward the town.

A half mile walk brought him in sight of a glimmering light, and he soon came to a small but comfortable-looking house.

Voices were heard within, and he knocked gently at the door.

Instantly there was a commotion within, then a dead silence followed.

Again he nocked more loudly than before, and a moment after the door opened and a man stood before him.

It was one whom he left at the Bushranger's cabin—the one who had opened the door there for him.

Calvert Forrester raised his pistol quickly and pulled the trigger.

The hammer fell with a click, but the cap did not explode.

The next instant a flash illumined the scene, a sharp report followed, and Calvert Forrester, with a low moan, fell in a heap upon the muddy ground. The bullet of the Bushranger had pierced his side.

CHAPTER XIX.

"The steamer arrived last night, and I should receive my Australian mail this morning. Has the boy been up from the office?" said Gerald Grey, one gloomy, rainy morning, six months after the departure of Calvert Forrester on his foreign mission.

"No, sir; but there is the bell now. I guess it's the boy," and the valet went down to the door.

Gerald Grey was again in New York, and strange to say, after the reader last beheld him married to Bonnie Bessie in the Jersey cottage, was keeping bachelor hall.

Around him was no evidence that a feminine hand cared for him, no indications that a fair form dwelt in those rooms.

But all around him was comfort; nay, lavish luxury. Married or single, he would live like the nabob he was.

Dropping his head peevishly upon his hand, he seemed to be lost in painful and deep thought, for his brow was clouded, his lips stern, and about him there was a nervousness unusual to his strong nature.

"Here's the mail, sir, and it's a big one, too," and the valet lay down before his master a large pile of letters and papers.

Wheeling himself away from his untasted breakfast, Gerald Grey seized upon the letters.

One after the other was thrown aside, as unimportant, until he came to one with the Australian postmark.

The seal of this was broken, and glancing over the contents, he exclaimed, suddenly:

"Great Heavens!"

"Sir?" said the attentive valet.

"I did not call you, sir! Leave the room!"

The man disappeared, filled with anxious curiosity to know the cause of his master's excitement, yet knowing that master too well to attempt to find out.

Springing to his feet, Gerald Grey paced the room with heavy steps for some time. His brow was black, his eyes playing with a strange light, and his hands clenched tight.

"I'll see what the papers have to say—my agent says he sends them with his letter," he said, after awhile, and he broke open a bundle of foreign papers.

Glancing his eyes over the columns, he soon found what he was in search of, and read aloud, as follows:

"A Mysterious Murder—An American gentleman foully dealt with—A chapter of crime and matters for the police to work up—The traveling agent of the New York firm of Langley & Co. mysteriously murdered.

"Stopping at the Queen's Hotel for the past two weeks has been an American gentleman—Mr. Calvert Forrester by name—who visited Australia in behalf of the New York firm of Langley & Co., who have a branch house in our city. Five days ago Mr. Forrester received a visitor, so the hotel clerk informs us, who left with him at nine o'clock in a carriage, and in a drenching rain.

"Ere he left, Mr. Forrester told the clerk he did not exactly know when he would return, and nothing was thought of his absence for several days.

"Then, the agents of the firm here called and said they knew of no business that could detain Mr. Forrester, and felt confident that something must have happened to him.

"Inquiry was at once set on foot, and it was found that the carriage containing Mr. Forrester and his companion had driven out into the country although rain was pouring hard at the time.

"The police were at once put on the track and the result was that eight miles from the town, in a lonely forest, the dead body of Mr. Forrester was found, a bullet through his heart.

"The body was recognized by the agents here more by the clothing than by the face, as decomposition had set in and greatly disfigured the features.

"When found he had no article of value on his person excepting a seal ring, containing the letters, 'G. G. to C. F.'

"A packet of letters from his wife and a New York member of the firm were found in the breast pocket of the coat, but his money, watch, sleeve buttons, and studs were gone proving that robbery had been the cause of his murder, and that the ring had been overlooked by his murderers.

"This murder, is doubtless another crime to be laid at the door of the Bushrangers, for it is evident that the man who decoyed Mr. Forrester away from his hotel was one of the [illegible] led him into a trap on some [illegible].

"The agents here will have the body buried here, as it is too much decomposed to embalm and send to America. The funeral will take place tomorrow at twelve o'clock from the Queen's Hotel, and we trust that our best citizens will attend en masse to show their respect to the unfortunate stranger who came to our land but to find a grave here.

"Mr. Forrester was a man of some little means, and leaves a lovely wife to mourn his untimely end."

Down went the paper and the letter of the agent was re-read, telling all that they knew of the sad affair, and enclosing the ring taken from the dead man's hand.

Gerald Grey gazed upon the trinket with a shudder; he had himself bestowed that ring on Calvert Forrester.

After some time in painful thought, he turned to his other letters, one more of which bore the Australia postmark.

This he read carefully and then, lighting a match, set it on fire.

He watched it consume slowly in the place in which he threw it, and then muttered:

"So ends Calvert Forrester—the man who saved my life, who was devoted to my every interest, and whom I loved as I would have loved my own brother. Peter!"

"Sir!" And the valet put in an appearance so suddenly that it was evident that he had been very near at hand—perhaps with his ear at the keyhole, for men have as much curiosity as women, especially in matters that in no way concern them.

"Peter, I will have my breakfast now, and then I wish you to pack my small sole-leather trunk, and have it ready for me to take to the eight o'clock train south. I am going away for a few days."

"Yes, sir; it will be ready. No bad news, I hope, sir?"

"Yes; Mr. Forrester has been murdered in Australia."

"Oh, Lord! save us! The dear young gentleman, and he so good and so handsome and so generous," and Peter remembered the numerous fees bestowed on him by that same hand that he now learned was mouldering in the grave.

"It is sad, Peter, very sad; but worse still, I must tell his poor wife of it. I fear it will go very hard with her."

"Indeed, it will, sir. I knew when my wife died, I —"

"Yes, yes, Peter; I am hungry so bring on the breakfast," interrupted Gerald Grey, for whenever a death was heard of, of any one known to Peter and his master, the valet always told of his suffering for his poor wife, and how he was afraid [illegible] alone for months after the sad [illegible].

Gerald Grey was therefore in no humor to have the thing rehearsed and he sent Peter on after his breakfast, which he ate in gloomy silence.

Then he went down town, and made known to the firm the fatal tidings he had received and the business house of Langley & Co. had its doors decked in mourning and the employes all felt the deepest grief in the loss of Calvert Forrester, for he was most popular with one and all.

But to Gerald Grey fell the hardest task, and his was the keenest grief, for his confidential clerk had been to him as a brother, and it was now his duty to speed away by rail and break the sad news to poor Maud—the beautiful wife who was anxiously watching and waiting for her husband's return.

With the rapid improvement of most American towns, the little village, where Gerald Grey had so nearly lost his life upon the gallows, sprung into a good-sized place, and boasted its railroad.

Hence, Gerald Grey was set down on his arrival at the depot, of which the citizens were exceedingly proud, and a flashy omnibus whirled him to the new hotel, which completely put in the shade the humble little inn, where he had formerly stopped.

But the same host, grown rich in hotel-keeping, kept the new house, and recognizing Gerald, welcomed him as an old friend, and ushered him at once into the very best room.

"Dinner will be ready in half an hour, Mr. Grey. Hope you have been well, sir; but you look a little pale. How do you like my new house, sir? One hundred rooms, all handsomely furnished, and with hot and cold water, sir. A carriage, you say?"

"No; a horse—the best in the stable. I am going into the country."

"Yes, sir, you shall have the horse at the door as soon as you have finished your dinner. A bottle of wine on ice, I suppose?"

"Yes; your best Burgundy."

The dinner and wine were excellent, and Gerald Grey seemed to enjoy them; yet his manner was often a little nervous; he could not shut out the disagreeable duty before him.

It was late in the afternoon when he mounted his horse, a really fine animal, and cantered out of town, strange thoughts crowding in his mind as he remembered how often he had ridden that same road before, and under different circumstances.

Two miles from town he came to where the road wound over a ridge of a high hill, and a glance ahead of him showed him a lady on horseback, about half a mile ahead.

She was riding quietly along, her horse at a walk.

Suddenly a man stepped out of the wood in front of her, and she came to a halt.

Then she wheeled her steed quickly and started back the way she had come as if in alarm, but another form sprang from the roadside, and his hand was upon her bridle-rein.

Gerald Grey was now dashing down the hillside at the risk of his neck; but he saw the woman strike the man sharply across the face with her whip in the endeavor to make him release his hand upon her bridle-rein.

The effort was fruitless, however, for the other man rushed to his aid, and the woman was powerless to resist further.

But having captured their fair game, the men stood in hesitancy, seemingly disconcerted, for there came a flying horseman toward them.

"Yes; it is her: who else can it be? That dark bay, that blue habit—I remember both, and I am fortunate once more to serve her," cried Gerald Grey, as he pressed forward at the topmost speed of his horse.

Seeing him coming, pistol in hand, the footpads let go their hold on the reins they had held and bounded into the thicket from whence they had come.

The next moment Gerald Grey reined his horse back on his haunches and two words escaped his lips:

"Great Heavens!"

The two looked into each others' faces, the man livid, the woman, recovered from her fright, with the rich blood rushing into her cheeks.

"Bonnie Bessie, in Heaven's name! what are you doing here?" at last said the man.

"I might ask the same question of you, Gerald Grey, but I am thankful that you have come, for you have done me a service," said Bessie, quietly.

"But why are you here when I believed you at the cottage in Jersey?"

"It has been one month since you came to that cottage, Gerald Grey, and I am not a woman to be slighted. Mine is a jealous nature, and I sought to find you out. I found in your desk a letter from a woman living here: it [illegible] thanked you [illegible] to accept a pair of slippers worked for you by her hands. Gerald Grey, no woman shall come between you and me, and I have sought her out to ask her what she was to you."

"Bessie, you are a silly little fool!"

"No; I am a jealous woman, and a tigress is not more dangerous," and the eyes of the woman flashed fire.

"And you have come here to see a woman whose name is signed to a friendly note?"

"Yes; I took her address from the postmark on the envelope, and came to see her. Arriving in the town, I stopped at the hotel and got a horse, for not knowing what might occur, I brought my habit along."

"And you are seeking Maud Forrester?"

"Yes; I am going to where you are now destined. Oh, Gerald, I have found you out—you do not love me. But you shall rue it, I [illegible]."

"[illegible] arrant fool, and I am [illegible] I found you [illegible] you went to the house of Maud Forrester. The woman of whom you are [illegible] married; her husband is Calvert Forrester, [illegible], and had [illegible] of my firm. [illegible] business to Australia, and there he lost his life—was murdered. Here are letters and papers containing the sad tidings and I am seeking the house of his poor wife to tell her all."

Another installment of this most masterly and fascinating story will be offered Ledger readers next week. Whoever subscribes regularly for the Ledger is entitled to our free cameras and patterns as announced on pages thirteen and fifteen.

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Two little girls were engaged in an animated discussion as to the merits of their respective homes.

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"Pooh!" said the other, "that's nothing. We own a Jersey cow, and we get a whole cowful of cream twice every day."

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BOYS AND GIRLS CORNER

Adrift on a Junk; Or, Boy Sailors Of the China Sea.

By St. George Rathborne.

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Begun in No. 30, July 25. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be procured from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER XXV.

KWANG CHOW TRIES IT AGAIN.

They all ran out of the cabin in hot haste, to find the said Kwang doubled up on the deck as though suddenly seized with cramps and rattling off a lot of jargon in his own language that seemed to be an appeal to the gods to spare him once more, and he would spend more time and money in bowing before the great joss, with prayer-papers and offerings galore.

It appeared as though the Chinaman had been made the recipient of another bad scare, and Julian glanced about him hastily with the idea of locating the source of danger; but nothing out of the usual met his eye.

Then, as on the former occasion, he bent over the waterman, and shook him by the sleeve, while demanding of him an explanation of his strange conduct.

His influence over Kwang was still strong enough to cause the fellow to temporarily forget his troubles, or at least take the American boy into his confidence, for he chattered like a monkey, with Julian putting in an occasional question straight to the point.

Presently the latter turned toward his friends, and Bob, who was watching his face as though it might be a barometer telling the state of the weather, saw him smile, which relieved the English lad not a little.

"It seems that there's another ghost aboard this wonderful craft, and if we keep on we'll have a shipload yet, though if they turned out as well as his last it would be a fine thing," was what Julian remarked.

Bob began to look serious, for that little streak of superstition in his nature would crop up and show itself in spite of his resolution and scorn.

Tressie laughed, utterly undismayed.

"Oh, how lucky that is, for we may still have a chance to see a real, genuine ghost, such as Kwang believes in. Ask him to show us where this one has his lodgings, for no one but Kwang seems to have any luck in finding them. As for me, why, I'd hunt all day if I thought I could discover a ghost," she said in her old-time merry way; and the mate looked approvingly on, for his heart had warmed amazingly toward this pretty, rosy-cheeked girl, who had not been afraid to venture upon the boisterous seas with her father, who was a sailor.

"He's told me where to find this old chap already, but all the coaxing on earth could not get Kwang to lead the expedition, not much. So, if you care about joining the party of search, come with me."

Even Bob made a move, though he looked back once or twice as if wondering whether it might not be dangerous to leave the tiller unwatched so long; and sails bellying out before the steady breeze were known to play tricks with vessels at times; still, curiosity as well as shame at being outdone in valor by a girl kept him from backing out after Julian made his invitation so general, so that three came behind the leader of the expedition when he started below decks again.

This time it was not forward but aft that Julian turned his attention. It appeared that there had been a small space there which in the hurried overhauling that he had given the craft on coming aboard he must have missed, and as is so often the case this unexplored territory proved to contain more of interest than the greater section which his eye had traversed.

Kwang had continued his investigations, doubtless still under the impression that he might come across something in the shape of a smoke like unto that which habit had made familiar to him; and for the second time his groping, talon-like fingers had come in contact with a squirming body tucked away in a niche, and which had give a dismal groan on being disturbed.

Julian bent down and looked, holding the lantern so that its rays would fall upon the object of his curiosity; and he made out almost instantly that poor Kwang's second apparition was a badly demoralized specimen of humanity, in the shape of a John Chinaman, probably one of the former crew left behind through some freak of fate when the others fled the ship.

Accordingly, he laid hold on the shrinking figure and began to pull with considerable force, though meeting with some feeble resistance.

Finally, when there was no longer any possibility of the fellow retaining his position in the cavity, he gave way of a sudden, and, rolling into view flopped on hands and knees directly before the young skipper, belching out a volley of inarticulate phrases that seemed to form a prayer for mercy, since his hands were upraised.

"Why, it's old Falstaff!" cried Merriwether, in surprise, and at the same time he laughed as though amused.

Indeed, any one might well be pardoned for smiling at the appearance of the fat wretch who now clung to Julian's knees, an expression of absolute terror upon his features, for he had recognized Merriwether, and remembering all the indignities that had been heaped on that worthy during his long period of captivity, believed the hour of judgment had arrived.

"What, a Chinaman called Falstaff!" exclaimed Julian, remembering that this was the stout and merry comrade of bluff Prince Hal in Old England some centuries ago, while Bob nodded his head as though echoing the question.

"Oh, it isn't his real name by a long shot—that would twist your tongue all out of shape for a week to say it right; but the captain and me we always called him Falstaff, because you see he's so fat, and be[illegible] a comical critter, connected in [illegible] way with the raising of an army of defense. We don't owe him much of an account, though he did once kick me for a reason—perhaps I was to blame, and, any way, I don't bear malice, not now, when [illegible] seem to be going our way."

About this time Julian noticed a frightened face poking around a corner, and which he knew full well belonged to Kwang, who, recovering in part from his prostration, and perhaps impelled by fear of being left alone with mysterious demons traveling around loose, as well as a natural curiosity to see what happened to his friends when they invaded the domain of the spirit, had crept after them, and was now staring hard at the groveling figure, perhaps trying to make it correspond in his mind with his conception of the terrible.

A word to Bob and that worthy had seized on the startled Kwang, dragging him forward, despite his resistance.

He calmed down after Julian had spoken a few sentences in their abominable pidgin-English, and consented to look squarely at the supposed ghost; as the fat buccaneer chanced to open his slant eyes about the same time, a sort of soul communion was established between them then and there, for they nodded their heads so violently that their queues became dislodged, and Merriwether declared they had found out that both belonged to the same guild or secret society, though never having met before.

This was interesting, in a way, just as if these Orientals had turned out to be Odd Fellows or Free Masons.

"Tell him," said Julian, "that he won't be hurt if he behaves himself, and doesn't try to play us false; but that if he plays any tricks we'll cut off his queue and torture him with a red-hot iron."

When the substance of this was translated to the other he made violent manifestations of approval, and apparently vowed by all the heathen deities that he would serve his new masters faithfully, or they could carry out their dire threat.

"We can trust him just as far as we can see him," was the practicable comment of the man who had known the prisoner for many years, showing that his reputation for honesty and truthfulness was not up to par.

Indeed, our friends, while rejoiced to find they were not to have the pleasure of a haunted junk after all, had already found cause for regret that so unwelcome an addition had been made to their number. This clumsy buffoon could hardly be of any service to them, and might cause considerable trouble sooner or later, when they were hiding among the islands, trying to keep the secret of their presence from the eyes and ears of the allied forces controlling the coast regions.

Perhaps he might add to their mirth, being a comical clown after a fashion; but for all this Merriwether knew he had the treacherous instincts of his class, and upon occasion could prove a thorn in their flesh.

Secretly he resolved to keep his eye on the other and at the first sign of treachery wind up his merry career.

He personally instituted a search of the fellow's belt and such other portions of his raiment as might hide his nasty weapons, and while the result did not fully compensate for the trouble, still it relieved their minds more or less concerning the possibility of his doing them personal injury at some future time.

Escorted by the group, the fat buccaneer was taken on deck.

Here Merriwether asked for the marine glasses and took a squint, as he called it, toward the horizon, almost immediately announcing that the land to be seen lying low under the sky-line was undoubtedly the cluster of singular islands which had occupied so prominent a place in the thrilling if brief story connected with his recent adventures.

Imagine, if you can, the feelings of Julian when he heard that he was now actually gazing on the bit of land that for seven long years had been the prison of that dearly loved and sadly mourned parent; it is hardly necessary to tell how his heart throbbed with affection as he strained his anxious eyes to survey the blur along the horizon, imagination filling in the picture.

Would he be able to rescue that prisoner of the isles? That must prove a favor more acceptable to him than the wealth of the rich Indies, something calculated to bless his whole future existence; and, oh, the glorious triumph of being able to restore the long-lost one to those gentle hearts that had mourned so sadly all these years.

So the night fell. Their progress continued to be all they could wish, and Merriwether was positive they should be in among the islands before dawn, when he had plans looking to their hiding and future actions. Many a time had he mapped out a grand scheme looking to the undoing of the pirates when his day should arrive, and now some of these clever situations could be utilized, even if he did not have a cruiser or a gunboat in his company.

With [illegible] Merriwether was surveying the heavens, looking to see whether there might be any change from the very favorable conditions now controlling matters; for much depended on such things, and his experience with typhoons was of a character to make him sceptical.

There was Julian who also waited to hear his judgment with no little anxiety, for he fancied he had detected some symptoms of

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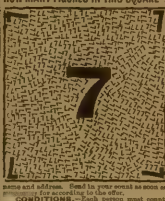

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gathering trouble off in that southeastern district where the winds herded, waiting to be let loose upon unwary travelers o'er the great deep.

"Something may spring up by morning, lad, and then again it's just as likely to go around another way. This here seems to be one of the cases where a good glass is the only sure guide. Let's hope for the best and that if it does drop down on us we'll be snug among the islands, in a cove I know of, where we can laugh at all the hurricanes that ever blew."

There was not one of the trio who did not heartily echo that wish. Tressie began to prepare the evening meal, which had been disturbed in a measure by these strange happenings, while Bob lounged about the tiller, and kept on the alert to see whether Kwang Chow, who with a persistence deserving of success was for the third time rooting about below, searching for the opium he believed to be somewhere about, ran across still another ghost.

Julian had taken the fat Chinaman into the cabin and was interrogating him through signs and snatches of the language of the Flowery Kingdom, but his success in that line was very meager until Merriwether joined in, and then some sense could be made out of the sing-song rejoinders of Falstaff.

Still, what could the fellow tell them that was worth hearing, beyond the facts connected with the hurried flight of the crew, at a time he had been below, trying to save some of his belongings. It had been his soft footfalls the mate had heard from time to time, though he believed it to be but the effect of his fevered imagination; for Falstaff admitted rummaging the whole vessel save the cubby-hole forward that served in lieu of a forecastle, and where he knew the prisoner had been confined, whom he appeared to be afraid to face for some reason or other.

When he saw the approach of the raft he became panic-stricken and hastened to conceal himself in the most inaccessible part of the junk, where only a Chinaman, used to the ways of his kind, would think to pry in search of hidden spoils.

So the presence of Kwang aboard had been his undoing.

He vowed to be good and called upon the bones of his ancestors to witness his oath, but Merriwether knew full well that even such a consideration, so solemnly taken, would avail their cause little should the bulky rascal ever find a first class opportunity to betray them to his fellow sharks.

When supper had been finished, the light was extinguished, for, as they were constantly approaching the land, and the lookout in the tower of the village perched upon the side of the hill maintained a never-ceasing watch, there was always a chance that their presence would be suspected, and and a few proas push out in the dark to see who they were.

This was just what Merriwether desired to avoid, as there could not be too much secrecy to please him. Accordingly from this time on they must continue to advance in the dark, trusting to the sagacity of the mate to take them to his secret nook by dawn.

Julian had noticed several tiny spots against the darker background of the land, and although nothing was said about the matter he had a suspicion that these might be junks or proas belonging to the piratical community, hovering about the offing with some purpose in view; and later developments proved him to be very close on the truth in his reasoning.

CHAPTER XVI.

AMONG THE PIRATE ISLANDS.

The night wore on, and it seemed as though the elements were in league with them at last, for the wind continued to waft the junk forward hour after hour, not swiftly but steadily, so that it became evident that as the night grew old they must be approaching the cluster of small islands, amid which Merriwether hoped to hide until they found an opportunity to carry out the balance of their plan.

Either Julian or the mate made it a point to be on deck all the time, for fear lest something might happen to play havoc with their carefully laid arrangements.

It was well on toward the time when they might expect to catch the first glimpse of coming dawn along the eastern horizon, and Julian found that the breeze had begun to die out, while the stars no longer dotted the heavens, proving that a change of some sort was impending.

He called Merriwether on deck for a consultation, and Bob came, too, having an inkling as to what was wrong.

The situation had a precarious look, for they must be close in by the islands, and the coming of day would disclose their presence to the lookout in the Hawks' Nest, with a result that would not be very pleasant.

"Get out the oars, and put Falstaff to work. I've seen him dig before now, and you'll be surprised what a pull he has for such a hippopotamus. With a mate like your Kwang they'll make the water-logged old hooker fairly jump," was Merriwether's characteristic way of putting forward his opinion.

Julian himself saw the wisdom of the proposition, for it would hold himself and his two comrades in reserve to the last, when possibly more of caution might be needed.

So the two Chinamen were given a chance to show what they could do in the line of rowing. Progress would have been very sluggish, indeed, but for the fact that the air and tide seemed to favor them more than a little.

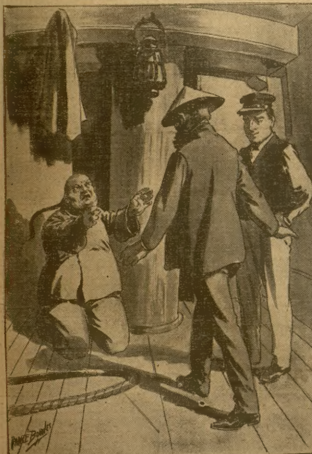
Julian hovered near the bow, straining his vision in the endeavor to discover signs through the gloom that stretched before them, possibly the outline of palm trees against the sky, announcing the blessed fact that they were close upon the outmost of the island group.

The mate came up behind him, not a little anxious himself, for he, too, had staked much on their reaching shelter before dawn came to ruin their prospects.

"Do you see anything, lad?" he asked, anxiously, sweeping his keen eyes to the right and to the left, for the darkness was not quite as dense as a short time back, and it became possible to see further away.

"Look!" he exclaimed, before Julian had a chance to answer, and his hand became set, with the index finger pointing toward a twinkling light that lay very low down along the horizon, and which Julian had supposed must be some star about to take the plunge out of sight in the west; "that's the light on the tower; they keep one there always during the night, making it something of a light-house for their wandering craft. Now, I have my directions, and we want to bear off sharply to the right. See, what did I say? Surely, that is a tree against the gray sky!"

Julian, having his attention turned to the new quarter, at once announced his belief that the mate was right, and a great load seemed to roll from his shoulders; for, although they were far from safe as yet, still



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Gonorrhœa, Gleet, Lost Manhood, Bladder and Prostate Troubles and general debility of men positively cured by SKEEN'S PAINLESS STRICTURE CURE.

It eradicates every trace of these ailments, in the shortest possible time, and makes you as sound as when a boy. Thousands of men are strictured, more or less, but do not know it. Remove the stricture and you will get well.

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the chance had come for which they longed.

Immediately the course was altered, and soon the trees became so distinct that every one recognized their character, and the twain at the oars worked harder than ever, Kwang having to strain himself not a little to keep on a par with the tremendous exertions of the fat buccaneer, who labored as though he had some object in view.

Nearer still, and Julian stood by the side of the mate who worked the tiller, keeping his eyes fastened on the shore line that began to unroll before them like a panorama.

"Well, we won't get in shelter any too soon for several reasons. Daylight is close at hand, and listen to the mutter of the storm away back yonder," said Merriwether, under his breath.

As the young fellow turned around he was just in time to see an electric sword slash the dusky sky back yonder over the stern of the junk, while the deep-toned growl of another thunder voice announced the advent of a tropical storm.

The ex-prisoner was looking for the opening, and in this dim light which was also very deceptive, it was no easy task to discover so small a split in the walls that reared themselves in front.

He had not examined these shores from time to time during the passage of many years without impressing every little detail on his memory, and when they came abreast of the narrow channel he did not mean to let it escape him.

It may be understood this was a critical period in their affairs, and that Julian's nerves were wrought up to a tension bordering on the hysterical; when suddenly he heard Merriwether utter an exclamation, and at the same time saw him sweep the tiller hard-a-port, bringing the vessel around, and heading directly toward the land.

"Have those joss-men do less splashing. We're safe now from the storm, and our only danger is in attracting attention, should any boat be lying in one of the channels, as sometimes happens when they are caught outside with the coming of night. Softer still; no hurry at all," whispered the mate, as the jaws of land rose up on either side of them, and they began to glide into a narrow channel that immediately turned and twisted in a manner to effectually shut out the sea and fashion an ideal refuge from the furious billows and the sweep of the hurricane.

Kwang saw to it that his comrade at the sweeps kept silence, for he had given him to understand what dreadful fate must overtake him should he do the least thing looking toward betraying them to the buccaneers.

It thrilled Julian to realize how close he must be to the scene of his beloved parent's imprisonment; to think that many times the Captain must have gazed upon these walls that shut in the channel of the islands, and sighed for the chance to flee far beyond their shadows, to the fair land beyond the great Pacific, where he had left his own. Had not Merriwether pictured how they planned, while fishing with their captors just off this same channel, and even made a bold attempt to run off with a boat belonging to the village, and how the unexpected failure of the wind rendered their efforts vain?

Under the instructions of the mate all of them kept out of sight as much as possible, save the two Chinamen, so that in case hostile eyes fell on the laboring craft, while they were working toward their hiding place, the enemy might easily imagine everything was serene.

The storm had now burst with considerable fury, and it was lucky indeed for the adventurous whites that they had found so snug a shelter before the wind demons began to riot out there on the bosom of the sea; for had they been caught so near the shore by the terrific gale nothing could have prevented the junk from being dashed upon the treacherous rocks and shivered into fragments.

It was a very dramatic entry after all, what with the booming of thunder, the howling of the wind, the deep-toned roar of the awakened sea monster, as his gigantic waves lashed the shore, while the tropical lightnings flashed zig-zag across the heavens with a terrible significance Julian had never seen equaled.

Through it all Merriwether calmly directed the course of the craft, nor did he mind the tremendous downpour of rain that for the time being fairly blotted out the shore-line, dim enough before; but holding the junk in check until the worst had swept by, he again urged the almost panic-stricken voyagers to resume their pulling, his own coolness inspiring them with renewed confidence.

The more intricate the passage became the better Merriwether liked it; showing that he had not wasted his time when compelled to labor in this vicinity in the interests of his captors.

Frequently there was a choice of passages, but not once did he hesitate, as every inch of this remarkable region was as familiar to him as the environs of a village would be to one born and brought up there; how frequently had he gone through this program in the dreary days of his captivity, looking forward to the time when fortune would allow him to make a desperate dash for freedom, and arranging little details with all the care of a general on the eve of a great campaign.

That preparation was now to bear fruit.

Once Julian saw something that gave him a cold chill, and while he spoke not a word he clutched the sleeve of Merriwether's garment and pointed to the right, where they had a fleeting glimpse of a proa half-hidden in a secure lagoon that formed one of many watery niches in either hand.

Only for a brief few seconds was this spectacle before their eyes, and then another furious squall of rain shut it out; when this in turn had died away the junk had made such progress forward that the lagoon was utterly left in the lurch.

Had they been seen? Were there keen eyes aboard the Malay proa to note the passage of the other boat, and would these fellows recognize her build as that of the ill-fated Half-Moon?

These were very pertinent questions to our adventurers, and on which the ultimate success or failure of their expedition might depend; instead of rescuing his father, Julian might yet find that he had come these thousands of miles only to share his misery.

Still he was full of hope and confident in the belief that a merciful Providence meant to further his plans, if he did his part faithfully.

Merriwether gave him to understand presently that they were now approaching a turn in the channel that would lead to a section seldom if ever visited by the people of the island colony, which fact had caused him to explore it many times when he had the opportunity, with an eye to this day when he should be hiding from their keen vision.

The storm was already blowing itself out, apparently, though Merriwether knew it was a peculiarity of these typhoon offshoots to raise hopes by seeming to dwindle away, only to burst forth again with greater violence than before, and he never trusted one of them until the sky cleared.

However, the state of the weather did not matter very much to them just at that time, for they would have to hide all day at any rate, perhaps longer, and the continuance of rough seas might keep the uneasy villagers shut up in their huts and caves, instead of prowling about the vicinity.

Thus far the old junk had served Julian many a good turn, and he had begun to feel quite a sincere affection for the quaint craft upon which his fortunes had been cast.

If it was his fate to be cast adrift, he believed he could have found many a worse refuge than this same Chinese craft. It had served in a benevolent role for once in its existence, as though weary of being made the vehicle through which those wicked plunderers sought to carry out their bold designs against civilized peoples or storm-tossed voyagers.

Navigation became even more difficult when they had entered the slender thread of water which Merriwether announced led to his hidden harbor; but at the helm they had one who knew his ground, and with a long experience back of him so far as handling clumsy junks was concerned; so that they scraped past jaws of rock, twisted suddenly around abrupt corners, and performed all manner of marvelous antics, in so far as the boys could see, finally bringing up in a nook where the mate had arranged for their comfort.

Julian pronounced it an ideal harbor, from which they could sally forth at the proper time, pounce upon the village of the allies, accomplish their errand of mercy, and with luck favoring them be away with the night wind, leaving the islands hull-down, so to speak, by dawn.

That was the plan in simple language, and all they could do was to possess their souls in patience and wait for the proper hour to come.

It would also be necessary to keep an eye on the fat sailor who might be tempted to slip overboard and swim away to take the startling news of their arrival to his confederates. It was understood at the first sign of such treachery he was to be placed in durance vile; or, if it happened to be Merriwether who made the discovery of his double-dealing the chances were he would do something even more radical, for his wrongs pressed hard on his mind, and he had myriads of past insults to urge him on to heroic treatment in the matter.

Since nothing more could be done now, they might just as well secure what rest remained to them, leaving one on deck to play the part of guard.

Of course, no lights would be shown at any time, now that they were far within the danger zone; nor could a fire be made in the cook's galley, for fear lest the smoke betray them in some unfortunate manner, so that they must put up with cold victuals for a time.

This was but a small privation to such earnest pilgrims, who were ready to go much further if by so doing they might advance the cause for which they suffered so gladly.

Merriwether was not easy about that stout Chink, and made up his mind the fellow should be put beyond the reach of temptation, lest in his weakness he attempt some indiscretion that land him in serious trouble, or on the other hand disturb the well-laid plans of the invaders.

When he came to look for the redoubtable Falstaff he found, to his dismay, that already the mountain of flesh had vanished, nor could Julian or Bob give him the least clew to the fellow's present whereabouts.

Another installment of this interesting story of adventure in the far East will appear in next week's Ledger. Each subscriber, as announced on pages thirteen and fifteen, is entitled to our free cameras and patterns.

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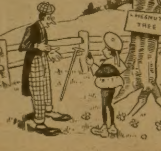
Interesting Discovery.



Lemuel—Why, Pa, here's a hedgehog's egg!

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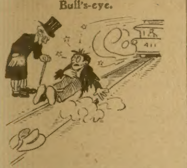
Bull's-eye.



Stranger—Did you miss your car?

Battered Party—Miss it? Naw, I hit it square first pop.

Quite a Narrow Escape.

She—Of course he bored me awfully, but I don't think I showed it. Every time I yawned I just hid it with my hand.

He (trying to be gallant)—Really, I don't see how a hand so small could—er—hide—er—that is—beastly weather we're having, isn't it?

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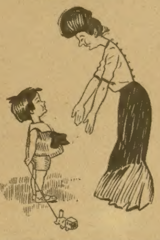
Mr. Search—I feel extremely flattered to find that you have made such a close study of my tastes. Please describe her.

Miss Brightlie—She's worth a million.

Enough Said.



Mother—Why, baby, you must come right into the house! Haven't you a cold?

Baby—Doe.

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The patterns shown below are furnished us by one of the best, if not the best, pattern manufacturers in New York. They comprise the very latest styles, and are unequalled for accuracy in fit, simplicity in use, and are most economical of material. They sell from the stores from twenty-five to fifty cents each. Full instructions are printed on every pattern. Three months' subscription to the CHICAGO LEDGER for 25 cents and any TWO of these patterns FREE. Six months' subscription to the CHICAGO LEDGER for 50 cents and FIVE of these patterns FREE. This offer is without equal. If you are wise you will take advantage of it at once.

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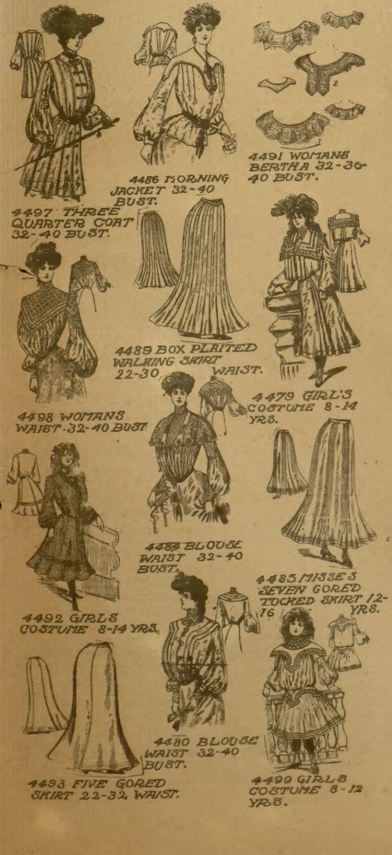
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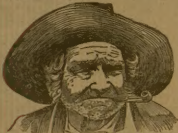

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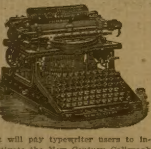

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A Nonsense Jingle.

If all the world was a feather bed,
 And ev'ry feather a wing,
We'd skim through the air in the sweet
  spring time,
 And sing, and sing, and sing.

If all the world were made of fur,
 And all the fur was felt,
We'd lie on the ground in the summer time,
 And melt, and melt, and melt.

If all the world was a field of gold,
 And the gold was pumpkin pie,
We'd save up our pennies in autumn time,
 And buy, and buy, and buy.

If all the world was blades of grass,
 And all the grass was trees,
We'd sit on the boughs in winter time,
 And freeze, and freeze, and freeze.

MORAL.

If all the world were turned around,
 No longer round 'twould be,
And somebody would have to write
 A new geography.

The White Violet.

Down in the grass in the corner of the field grew a bed of lovely violets. Some of them were purple, some were pale blue, but this little violet of which I am speaking was pure white. It grew a little apart from the others on the border of the bed, and if it were more beautiful and pure than its sisters it was not proud, nor did it think itself better than the rest, and none envied its beauty.

One summer there was very little rain. The grass was parched; the trees were gray with dust, and the violets drooped their heads and longed for rain. Through all this the white violet remained lighthearted and brave. She tried to cheer her sisters by telling them that the rain would come today. But the days went by until six were past, and still no rain. The next day was Sunday, and a little girl who came through the fields with her mother espied the violet bed.

"Oh, mamma, see these poor, dry violets, and this little white one blooming all alone. I shall take it home and put it in water."

She tried to pick it, but it clung to the earth. The white violet would never go away to a cool, shady place with plenty of water to drink while her sisters were hot and thirsty in the dry bed.

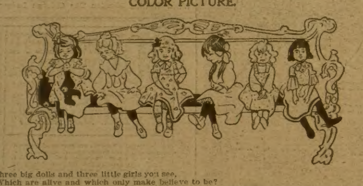
"How strange," said the little girl. "See, mamma, I can't pull it up."

"I think it would rather stay with its sisters, Jessie. Come, now, and perhaps some other time it will come with you."

So the two passed on, leaving the white violet looking after them with wistful eyes. Toward the end of the day it grew cooler. A cool wind blew over the violets, causing them to lift up their heads. Then down came the rain in great drops. Every flower lifted its face to catch the raindrops. How glad the white violet was then that she had stayed with her sisters.

For a long time the violets nodded gaily in their beds, with an occasional shower to refresh them, when one day they were plucked by Jessie, who took them home to decorate the table of her birthday party. The white violet she put in the center of the bunch, and there it nodded cheerfully until the rest of the flowers withered and were thrown out. Then it was pressed between the leaves of a heavy book and was used for Jessie's botany lesson.

COLOR PICTURE.



Three big dolls and three little girls you see,
Which are alive and which only make believe to be?

Enjoying Himself.

A fond mother sent her small boy into the country and after a week of anxiety received the following letter:

"I got here all right, and I forgot to write before. It is a very nice place to have fun. A fellow and I went in a boat, and the boat tipped over, and a man got me out, and I was so full of water that I didn't know nothing for a long while.

"A horse kicked me over, and I have got to have some money to pay the doctor for mending my head. It was broken a bit.

"We are going to set an old barn on fire tonight, and I am not your son if I don't have some real fun. I lost my watch, and I am very sorry. I shall bring home some snakes and a toad, and I shall bring a tame crow if I can get 'em in my trunk."

An Up-to-date Grandma.

In these days of advanced thought even the children become imbued with the ideas of possibilities undreamed of in the days of Puritan orthodoxy.

An old lady who is living up to date, keeping pace with the times, ready to believe and interest herself in every new invention and to try every new mechanical device possible for her to utilize, resolved to purchase a typewriter, and became quite an expert in its use, relates the New York Times.

Her young granddaughter was greatly impressed with the ambitious spirit of her grandmother and her sympathies were always aroused at her tales of the olden time, with its lack of comforts and advantages and the narrowness of her early years.

One day, chancing to read a typewritten letter the old lady had written, she looked up thoughtfully and said:

"Grandma, I think you ought to be born again and given another chance."

A Lesson in Manners.

The other day a young girl was talking to a business man whose lack of manners is notorious, relates an exchange. During the conversation his hat remained on his head. The girl did not like it, as glances at the offending hat plainly showed. Finally he sniffed rather audibly and said: "I've a most fearful cold in my head."

"Ah!" said the girl, as if talking to herself, "that explains it."

"Explains what?" asked the man.

"Why, you're keeping your hat on when you are talking to a lady."

The hat came off in the time represented by the proverbial "jiffy."

A Mystified Crow.

During a piazza game of ping pong, one of the balls was sent quite a distance out over the lawn, where a crow seized it and bore it off in triumph, evidently thinking it was an egg. After much pecking, from all of which the frolicsome little ball bounced away unbroken, the crow had an excited consultation with seveyral of his fellows, and then deliberately carried the ball to the top of a high tree and let it drop, says the New York Tribune. Again the assembly of black-feathered experimenters gathered around in amazement.

Was there ever such a remarkable egg? It had fallen from a height that played havoc with their eggs and their little ones as well, and yet survived intact! Then one after another tramped on it, cawing loudly all the while.

At last, in sheer exhaustion and disgust, they all gave it up, flew to the top of their favorite tree, and, still cawing loudly, watched one of the ping pong players come out from the house and carry off this invincible egg that had baffled their boldest attacks.

Goin' Barefoot.

It's more fun goin' barefoot than anythin'
  I know.
There ain't a single 'nother thing that
  helps yer feelin's so.
Some days I stay in Muvver's room a
  gettin' in her way;
An' when I've bothered her so much she
  sez, "O, run and play!"
I say, "Kin I go barefoot?" en she says
  "If y' choose—"
Nen I alwuz wanter holler when I'm pullin'
  off my shoes!
If y' often go round barefoot there's lots
  o' things to know—
Of howt' curl yer feet on stones so they
  won't hurt y' so—
An' when th' grass is stickley an' pricks
  y' at a touch,
Jes' plunk yer feet down solid an' it don't
  hurt half so much.
I lose my hat mos' every day, I wish I did
  my shoes—
Er else I wish I was so poor I hadn't none
  to lose!

—Harper's Magazine.

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